

## Academic Dishonesty in a Post-Secondary Multilingual Institution

Daniel Chang  
*Simon Fraser University*

### Abstract

While plagiarism is a continuing educational writing issue in many post-secondary institutions, instances of contract cheating are also rising. Plagiarism is usually conceptualized as a type of writing misconduct or violation of existing institutional academic standards, but very little attention has been paid to contract cheating—when students seek paid tutors to write their course assignments. The present paper focuses on one multilingual undergraduate student's contract cheating experience, demonstrating her views on academic dishonesty and help seeking, and how she witnessed her multilingual peers engaging in contract cheating activities. Findings reveal that the participant's learning might be driven by her attempts to maintain her academic status. Her participation in several paid tutorial services might be due to her bringing her own cultural values to post-secondary learning and trying to maximize her GPA as well as fulfil the learning needs of the courses she was taking. Important implications related to the present research encourage educators to revisit multilingual students' learning needs related to academic misconduct and academic integrity in post-secondary education.

### Introduction

Plagiarism is considered a form of academic dishonesty when one student, or a group of students, intentionally engages in appropriating text from source materials without proper acknowledgment of the sources, or copies other students' written products and wrongly attributes the ownership of the written work. Although plagiarism is an ongoing issue for academic institutions; nowadays, it has come to post-secondary instructors' attention that some students try to buy academic papers online, hire disciplinary experts to write their final examinations, or hire disciplinary experts to take online courses on their behalf to fulfil their degree requirements. Contract cheating, thus, is a recently rising form of academic dishonesty where students intend to complete their coursework by contractually employing a third party (e.g. a tutor from a tutoring agency) to finish their work for course credit (Walker & Townley, 2012).

In the post-secondary institution where I have been working, I have seen many advertisements written in languages other than English on a student bulletin board that is for advertising academic services, such as services for custom writing, completing online courses, small-class tutorials for exams, or hassle-free editing and proofreading services. To explore these services, I joined one of the online service messaging groups and have come to realize that many multilingual post-secondary students have engaged in these activities. The tutorial companies even advertise good results, thus trying to hook more students to use their services. Not surprisingly, since many multilingual students need a certain level of grade point average (GPA) to retain their academic status, they are tempted to use these custom writing or editing services in order to be academically successful. Specifically, these services can provide contracted support to these students in the students' strongest language (e.g., Mandarin Chinese).

The present research paper reports on parts of selected findings collected from a large-scale, university-funded project that explores learning resources for multilingual students and examines factors that contribute to multilingual students' successful learning. During data collection, a female undergraduate student named Shelly (a pseudonym)<sup>1</sup> was invited to participate in the project interview. The author of this research paper (hereafter "I") was one of the graduate research assistants for the project exploring the learning needs of multilingual undergraduate students. I was assigned to interview Shelly on three different days with specific research focuses relating to exploring the resources for disciplinary language learning. During the interview, she raised several issues pertaining to academic misconduct of multilingual writers; thus, her interview was selected for more in-depth interpretation.

The present study interprets parts of the excerpts gathered from Shelly's case study and her narrative description of her experiences with plagiarism and contract cheating, showcasing how she handled her everyday academic learning and how she conceptualized the existing academic misbehaviours among her multilingual peers. Although there are only a few selected findings from Shelly's interview excerpts included, I believe that these excerpts, along with their interpretations, will be particularly valuable for gaining a preliminary understanding of how a multilingual student like her is tempted to engage in contract cheating and plagiarism activities during the course of her post-secondary disciplinary learning. Thus, the primary research questions in the study are (1) How does a multilingual student using English as an additional language (EAL), like Shelly, view academic dishonesty in post-secondary education? and (2) How does her academic learning experience affect her decision to engage in contract cheating?

## Literature Review

### Issues of Academic Dishonesty in Post-Secondary Institutions

Plagiarism has long been an existing academic dishonesty issue in many post-secondary institutions. It has typically been conceptualized as a type of academic writing misconduct or violation of existing institutional academic standards. The focus of plagiarism research tackles the following issues: (1) the reasons for plagiarism (Bamford & Sergioiu, 2005; Devlin & Gray, 2007), (2) the type of students who are likely to plagiarize (Pecorari, 2003; Scanlon & Neumann, 2002), (3) the context where plagiarism occurs (Jocoy & DiBiase, 2006; Selwyn, 2008), (4) the implications related to how post-secondary institutions to handle plagiarism (Brown & Howell, 2001), and (5) post-secondary multilingual learners' beliefs about textual appropriation and citation (Polio & Shi, 2012). Although it is important to research the above-mentioned plagiarism issues of students and institutional policy, not much empirical evidence has been provided to inform institutions about why students engage in contract cheating (a type of academic dishonesty). In particular, it has not been clear why some multilingual university students using EAL risk engaging in activities such as contract cheating or custom writing services to gain a credential, course credits, or better grades (Lancaster & Clarke, 2008; Rigby et al., 2015; Walker & Townley, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> I use pseudonyms or mask the names of all courses and individuals mentioned in this research paper.

### **Reasons for Academic Dishonesty**

With regard to academic dishonesty, a large portion of research has been conducted on plagiarism instead of contract cheating. The reasons for plagiarism might vary individually, but, for multilingual students, research has often attributed multilingual students' plagiarism to cultural differences (Hayes & Introna, 2005), or to the fact that they have encountered difficulties in learning or writing academic essays (Devlin & Gray, 2007; Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010). In Devlin and Gray's (2007) research, they found that the contributing factors of plagiarism include poor academic skills, external pressure, and learning needs. Gullifer and Tyson's (2010) thematic analysis of student interviews has shown that procrastination or students' fear of poor academic performance might be the potential causes of plagiarism or academic dishonesty. These findings suggest that multilingual students might feel hopeless or helpless when they encounter difficulties in their post-secondary studies (Maier & Seligman, 1976); they, therefore, seek inappropriate external academic assistance to solve their challenges. There has been, however, little specific empirical evidence that explores the reasons for contract cheating among multilingual students. Only one study reports that students who "have English as an additional language are more likely to 'buy'" a customized academic essay (Rigby et al., 2015, p.35), which suggests that students' linguistic or cultural background might play a role in shaping their decision of hiring a tutor or not. Similar to plagiarism, with contract cheating, one can reasonably infer that learned helplessness, poor academic skills, or procrastination might be major reasons multilingual students would risk being caught hiring someone to complete their course assignments.

### **Needs for Reconceptualization of Intentional Academic Dishonesty**

While the reasons for plagiarism vary individually, some plagiarism research has found that when multilingual students unintentionally plagiarize in post-secondary schools, such acts might mark one of the milestones for their developing academic literacy. Pecorari (2003) and Pecorari and Petric's (2014) research, in particular, urges institutions to re-conceptualize multilingual students' acts of plagiarism, as these might indicate to the instructors that these students are beginning to be aware of academic discourse. Although Pecorari's (2003) reconceptualization framework accounts for unintentional plagiarism by multilingual students, there is also a need to reconceptualize intentional plagiarism and academic misconduct, such as contract cheating, by multilingual students who try to find custom writing services or editing/proofreading services outside of the academic community. Such actions—outsourcing inappropriate extracurricular support—might signal some of these multilingual students' struggles, challenges, and learned helplessness in their post-secondary learning, beyond their language needs. At the same time, contract cheating might signal that multilingual students bring some of their home cultural values into their academic post-secondary practice in other countries. More importantly, institutions that offer admission to international students might also take their learning needs into account by trying to establish or improve institutional facilities that best support these students' disciplinary learning.

### **Institutional Policies: Implications from Research**

Considering institutional approaches to handling plagiarism and academic integrity issues, research has suggested strategies that might help to minimize the likelihood of students engaging in inappropriate textual misconduct online (Olt, 2002). For multilingual students, some research even takes a contrastive analysis approach to compare how writing in a first language and additional language differ in terms of appropriating academic texts (Keck, 2006). Brown and Howell (2001), on the other hand, have found that having students carefully read the institutional policy statement might be an effective way to prevent students from engaging in academic dishonesty. In summary, it appears that most plagiarism research has been concerned about (1) prevention of academic dishonesty or (2) exploration of student plagiarizing activities, attempting to offer recommendations for higher education institutions to regulate students' academic misconduct in academia without considering these students' real needs beyond what these institutions see as inappropriate actions.

### **The Study**

#### **The Interview Excerpts from Shelly's Contract Cheating Experience**

Shelly is a fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in economics at a post-secondary institution in British Columbia. She was born in Guangzhou, in the Province of Guangdong, China. She came to Canada at the age of 18 upon finishing high school in China. She was first admitted to an international college near the university where she is currently studying. Upon completion of the first two years at the college, she successfully transferred to the university with a major in economics. She speaks Mandarin and English, with only listening proficiency in Cantonese. I was wondering why she could not speak Cantonese since it is counterintuitive to say one was raised in a Cantonese environment but is unable to speak the language. She mentioned that her family environment and her schooling in China were all in Mandarin Chinese, with only a few friends speaking Cantonese on the daily basis. Her long-term academic goal is to pursue a graduate degree in economics in another English-speaking country, such as Australia.

Shelly was one of the interested research participants recruited for the university-funded project described earlier. By the time of interview, Shelly was a full-time fourth-year student and the semester was her second-to-last semester. She told me that she would try to apply for graduate school in Australia, so she had been studying since the beginning of her fourth year for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test to provide proof of English language proficiency for graduate school admission. At the beginning of the interview, when I asked Shelly to offer reasons for taking a course in natural resource management, she implied that this course was a popular GPA boosting course. However, when she took the course, she realized that it required a highly proficient command of English, so it took her a lot of time to study for this course. Shelly also reported that her friends mainly included students from Mainland China, and only a few Canadian-born Chinese students who were capable of understanding Shelly's native language but usually replied to her in English. It was also interesting to note that the way Shelly selected what courses to take was mainly dependent on

whom she took the course with. That is, she preferred to take courses with her friends because they could help each other out, or to have someone to rely on during learning.

I scheduled three interview sessions with Shelly to discuss her learning experiences in the university, her writing issues, and her overall impression of teaching and learning in the university. The interviews were semi-structured and informal in nature; the purpose was to elicit realistic, trustworthy data from the research participant in order to deeply explore her issues of learning at a multilingual university (DiCicco- Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Though generalizability has been an important concern in case-study methods (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000), the sole focus is to explore how a multilingual student views academic dishonesty in her academic life and dig deeply into her perceptions of why many of her multilingual peers engage in such academic misconduct. The interviews were conducted in the student's native language, Mandarin Chinese, and then were transcribed and translated by me.

In the present study, Grounded Theory (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Martin & Turner, 1986) was used to gather and analyze the case study data. The data analysis was conducted in NVivo—software for coding and analyzing qualitative data. I first reviewed the translated version of the transcripts and assigned codes relating to “Tutor’s Help,” “GPA Booster,” “Plagiarism,” or “Academic Dishonesty.” Then, the conversations relating to the above-mentioned codes were extracted and interpreted thematically: (1) GPA Booster and Finding a Tutor to “Help” with Assignments and (2) Hiring a Tutor to Write a Sample Programming Code and All Students Do the Same Thing. The two interview excerpts are included in Appendix 1 at the end of this article. To protect the research participant's identity and the courses she actually enrolled in, all the course names below, along with her name, have been changed.

### **Findings**

From the two interview excerpts presented in Appendix 1, Shelly's confession of hiring tutors points out the disciplinary struggles that multilingual students might encounter in their post-secondary disciplinary learning at an English-medium university in Canada.

Interestingly, it is apparent that what guides the participant's selection of courses was also the notion of GPA booster, along with having friends in the same course. That is, if a course is easy and has the potential to result in a higher grade, then the participant tends to choose that course regardless of her interests and personal abilities. According to Shelly's definitions of GPA booster courses, she revealed that there are two types of so-called GPA booster elective courses (e.g. Programming 100). One is that the course itself is very easy and requires very little academic effort. Furthermore, Shelly mentioned that “another aspect [of GPA booster] is like this course is not easy, but if you hire a tutor, the tutor will help you ace the course.” This response shows that although Shelly did feel that she was “not that techy,” she still chose the course because she thought that it had the potential of raising her GPA if she paid a tutor to “write a sample assignment based on the assignment instructions.”

On the contrary, with regard to the mandatory courses that were part of her disciplinary degree requirements (e.g. Accounting 200 and Accounting 250), it seems that she also chose to hire a tutor because she encountered learned helplessness when the accounting concepts were not

really clear to her and she felt that there was nothing she could do about that: “So at first, for this course, you really need to practice the [accounting] problems. And furthermore, there are some concepts that will confuse me, but what can I do? Just read the textbook?” So, she ended up hiring a tutor who “did the questions” for her and passed the course.

It seems that when Shelly chose to hire a tutor, she was fully aware of what the tutor could do for her. Most importantly, she was capable of analyzing the benefits and the costs of hiring a tutor if she chose to enrol in a course that she was not really interested in:

Because you need to spend time, but for us, the reason why we took this course is to get our GPA higher, it is easy and saves some time, and we can get a high mark just by hiring a tutor. If we hired a tutor and we could not get the result we want, then we wouldn't have spent time on it. Unless you really like [the course], then it's a totally different story.

This shows that the ultimate goal of disciplinary learning might be distorted when all the focus is on “[getting]... GPA higher.” GPA-guided learning might potentially be the reason why the participant would rather hire a tutor than put effort into learning and studying the disciplinary content. This quotation also suggests that the participant's learning might be guided by her own cultural value that getting a high grade is the norm of learning.

When Shelly mentioned that she found a tutor, I asked whether she knew if this was a common practice among multilingual students in post-secondary education or not. She confessed that the majority of the classmates she knew engaged in contract cheating to pass or ace the course: “My best knowledge is around 70% of Chinese students hired a tutor for the course.” From this, it can be seen that the participant considered hiring a tutor to pass courses to be a common academic practice, suggesting that such practices students bring from abroad might be related to cultural and educational practices in their home countries where they always hire a tutoring agency for passing examinations. Interestingly, almost every post-secondary course has a teaching assistant (TA) who is capable of handling students' academic issues, but the quality of assistance that a TA can provide may also shape Shelly's decisions regarding contract cheating. “When you asked TA a question, then TA will say that he or she is not really sure, maybe you should go to the professor.... Then I was like, okay, I have nothing to do....” This shows that the quality of assistance that a TA can provide might be very limited, which in turn means that the participant's learning needs are not fulfilled.

In sum, from the interview excerpts presented in Appendix 1, although Shelly confessed to several instances of academic (mis)conduct as a multilingual student, these excerpts reveal the extent to which Shelly engaged in activities related to academic dishonesty, such as contract cheating. On the surface, the decision to engage in contract cheating might seem to be a conscious personal choice, but it seems that Shelly does bring some of her home cultural values into post-secondary learning, such as paying a tutor to help with disciplinary content, write a sample code, or complete the questions, or seeking extracurricular assistance to raise her GPA. These reasons beyond contract cheating could potentially be very important for educational practitioners to keep in mind when they make administrative institutional policies or designate TA funding for supporting multilingual students.

### Discussion and Implications for Institutional Academic Integrity Policy

Following Pecorari (2003) and Pecorari and Petric's (2014) research that re-positioned multilingual EAL students' unintentional plagiarism, the present paper also intends to re-conceptualize the students' disciplinary learning needs in the context of contract cheating.

From Shelly's interview excerpts, it can be seen that her learning might be heavily driven by the possibility of whether the course will help her obtain a higher GPA. That is, her learning might not be guided by her interest or personal ability but by the chance of getting higher grades on exams and finishing the degree requirements. These findings are consistent with Hayes and Introna's (2005) cultural argument of plagiarism that "some overseas students are said to plagiarize, both intentionally and unintentionally, due to their lack of experience in essay writing, as many Eastern countries still rely exclusively on examinations" (p. 215). Similarly, Rigby et al.'s (2015) analysis also showed that students' cultural background might be a predictor of contract cheating. In China, upon entering primary schools, students are already engaging in academic competition. Their parents find tutorial schools in attempts to help them ace all their school examinations, ranging from school midterms to college entrance examinations. Aiming for a higher grade has been a norm deeply rooted in certain multilingual students' academic pursuits, so when Shelly went abroad for her post-secondary education, she might have brought such values to her disciplinary learning practice. Especially in Shelly's case, she wanted to take courses that would help her obtain a higher GPA, so she would rather pay for the tutor to guide her, so that she could pass the course and maintain the desired GPA.

Furthermore, the notion of selecting GPA booster courses has two major aspects, as reported by Shelly. One is that the course itself is very easy, whereas the other is that paying a tutor will make the course easy. Although Shelly did not clearly specify what makes a course easy, the interview excerpts do show that (1) paid tutorial services or contract cheating will help to mediate the difficulty of the course and (2) she might have experienced poor TA disciplinary support. When Shelly mentioned that the TA kept referring her to the professor, she had started to wonder about "the qualifications of TA" and whether she "can just be a TA [herself], and ... [she] can refer anyone to the professor" whenever students have disciplinary questions. Consistent with what Gullifer and Tyson (2010) suggest in their analysis, when students suffer academically, they might start to think of remedial ways to possibly retain their academic status within the community. This analysis explains the reasons poor academic performance might push a multilingual student like Shelly to seek paid tutorial services (e.g. contract cheating) as a coping strategy and risk being caught (Yan, 2017).

Secondly, Shelly noted that other students with EAL backgrounds who shared the same status as her also engaged in paid tutorial services, but the extent to which such tutorial services lead to unethical conduct (e.g. contract cheating) is still unclear. It is not wrong to find a tutor to coach disciplinary content, but it seems that the practice of students engaging in contract cheating needs some attention from post-secondary institutions. As a result, institutions might need to establish a set of new standards to address unethical academic practices while taking into consideration the learning needs of multilingual students. For instance, post-secondary institutions might need to set boundaries for students who seek tutorial services outside the university, allowing some room for external tutors to work with the students by obtaining a

signed document from the professor. All types of academic misconduct, including intentional plagiarism and contract cheating, might require further attention from post-secondary educational researchers in order to explore the reasons some multilingual students like Shelly, or students from other cultures, seek illegitimate academic support outside of the university community. So far, very few attempts have been made to revisit multilingual students' intentional academic misconduct, so revisiting this issue might provide useful information for policy makers in post-secondary institutions to establish additional supportive facilities to address these student needs.

Overall, while multilingual students bring their cultural values into post-secondary learning and their learning is guided by aiming for a higher GPA, lack of disciplinary support from teaching assistants, according to Shelly's interview, may constitute the major reason an EAL student like her sought paid tutorial services to help her understand course content. The fact that Shelly reported that the TA always referred her to the professor and the professor referred her to the TA back and forth indicates that her learning needs have not been addressed fully. The support services in higher education (e.g. teaching assistants) appear to have neglected her learning needs; thus, she had to seek external paid tutorial services to fulfil her expectations. This finding further suggests that she might have experienced learned helplessness, which means she felt helpless and hopeless when she was not academically successful (Maier & Seligman, 1976; Raufelder & Regner, 2017).

If there is demand, then there will be supply. Some unethical academic tutorial services for contract cheating (e.g. selling exams, buying papers, and custom writing) have been established because there is an increasing learning need from post-secondary multilingual students. Advertisements for these services have been designed to address these needs, so many struggling multilingual students, such as the case study student introduced in the present paper, might turn to these services to maximize the academic merits, regardless of whether it is ethical (finding a tutor) or unethical (having the tutor write a sample code for a computer course). The present research attempts to uncover some hidden learning needs from a multilingual student's case through the lens of her experience, intending to explore the reasons underlying her actions and decision-making process. Shelly, the research participant in the present case study, has provided useful and important insights for post-secondary institutions and academic dishonesty researchers. Perhaps, while there are pre-defined rules regulating and handling academic dishonesty and academic misconduct in post-secondary institutions, it is, however, much more important to re-conceptualize multilingual students' learning and linguistic needs in the context of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds to understand and explore the factors that lead to their learned helplessness or their need to aim for a higher GPA. Thus, further examination of post-secondary students' academic misconduct might be necessary with respect to how a student like Shelly, along with TAs and professors, perceives academic misconduct and how the academic needs of multilingual students can be fully addressed by institutions of higher education.

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## Appendix 1

### 1. GPA Booster and Finding a Tutor to “Help” with Assignments

During the first interview, Shelly and I were talking about some common GPA booster courses in the university. I invited her to give some examples of GPA booster courses in the university that she took in the past semesters. In the conversation below, A represents the researcher (me), whereas B represents Shelly – the case study student. The bolded lines represented the key findings pertaining to the present research paper.

A：可以讓我知道一下 GPA Booster 是什麼概念嗎？[Oh...Could you help me conceptualize what a GPA booster is?]

B：大概就是...有兩種概念，一個是它真的這個課很簡單。[It has two aspects, the first is it’s super easy.]

A：嗯嗯。[Okay]

B：一個是...這個課不簡單，但是你會去找 **Tutor**、**Tutor** 會讓這個課變得很簡單。

**[Another aspect is like this course is not easy, but if you hire a tutor, the tutor will help you ace the course!]**

A：喔...就是...好，讓我理解一下就是，第一個就是...這門課真的很簡單。[Oh okay, so let me clarify my understanding... so the first is that the course is very easy for students].

B：對。[Yes]

A：另外一個就是這門課不簡單，可是它拿分比較輕鬆。[Another thing is the course is not easy, but the way it is graded is easy.]

B：差不多，對。就比如說有一個課就是那個 PRO100。[Yea, like that, for example PRO100.]

A：PRO100？[PRO100?]

**B：對，PRO100 那個聽說過吧，那個其實...那門課其實就是如果你是真的懂電腦的話，那個課真的不難。但是一般選這種課的人都是像要衝什麼 WQB 的那種，什麼 B-Science 那個課的，就是會去選那個課，然後那個課因為...你完全不懂電腦你就很難去學這個課程 Python 什麼電腦語言特別難，但是如果你去找 Tutor 的話，就是找那種補習機構，他們就會幫你理的很清晰，然後告訴你這個地方會考你什麼這樣。然後作業什麼也是幫你做這樣。[Yes, PRO 100, have you ever heard of it? That course, if you really know computers, then that course is really a breeze. But for students who choose this kind of course, they all hope to use that course to count towards their graduation requirement, for example the science requirement. That course .... if you don't know computers, it's hard for you to ace that course, such as you learn Python computer programming language in that course ... but one thing is if you pay for a tutor to help, that is you go and find a tutor in a tutoring centre, then the tutor will help you, and let you know what will be tested. For assignments, the tutor kind of "helps" you do the assignments in the technical aspects.]**

A：補習機構，有這種玩意兒我都不知道(笑)。[Is there a tutoring centre? I have never known!]

B：就不是它貼很多什麼 Tutor 之類的。[So like the bulletin outside of the library, there are a lot of ads, and saying tutors...]

A：妳有找過嗎？[So did you find one?]

B：我曾經找過。[Yes, I did.]

A：那要付錢嗎？[Did you pay the tutor?]

B：當然要啊。[Of course!]

A：沒有，我說...當然要，我是說...就是付錢大概怎麼樣的付法？是一次...付一下，還是說 10 堂課，280 什麼的。[I meant, how did they charge you? You paid him per time, or it's like 280 dollars for 10 lessons?]

**B：它有分，有一些是...你可以去一次給一次錢這樣子，然後有的就是長期的那種，就是你一次給齊，然後你每次去上。[They have several options for you. You can pay as you go, or a long-term contract. It's like you pay all at once, and you should attend each class.]**

A：OK，那妳覺得那邊那個 Tutor 怎麼樣？那個補習機構。[So... for the tutor in that tutoring centre, how did you feel?]

B：我覺得看吧，其實不是說每個機構怎麼樣，是看你遇到那個老師怎麼樣，就是遇到的那個教你的那個人怎麼樣。[It depends. Actually, it's not the tutoring centre. It depends on how good the tutor is...]

A：那教妳那個人怎麼樣？[So how about YOUR TUTOR?]

B：之前就是教我 PRO100 那個，還蠻好的。[The tutor who coached my PRO100? He is nice.]

A：蠻好的。[Nice.]

B：對對，他就是你有問題問他，他基本上就會儘可能很快回答你啊什麼的。[Yes, so basically, if you have questions and throw the questions to him, he will answer for you.]

A：OK。[Okay]

B：對。[Yes]

A：那是...面對面還是？[Was it face to face or?]

B：面對面。[Yes, face to face.]

A：喔，面對面。[Oh face to face]

B：因為那種東西你補課這種東西，你還是面對面比較好，我覺得。[Because for tutoring, I think it's better to be in face to face format.]

A：OK。因為那一門就是做網頁的課嘛，對不對？[Okay, to my best knowledge, that course is all about making websites, am I correct?]

B：對。[Yes]

A：做網頁的課，那...所以妳覺得...為什麼做網頁的課妳要找 Tutor(笑)？[So... if that's all about making websites, why do you think you needed a tutor?]

B：我不會。[Because I am not that techy.]

## 2. Hiring a Tutor to Write a Sample Programming Code and All Students Do the Same Thing

This occurred in the middle of the second interview, where I asked Shelly to recall her last conversation. I was very curious about her decision of finding an external tutor and how the tutor could help her academically. The bolded lines were the key findings relevant to the analysis.

A：好。沒關係。好，那上次妳說妳在拿那個 PRO100 的時候，妳有去找老師。[Okay, last time you told me that you found a tutor for PRO100.]

B：找 Tutor 嗎？就是那個補習。[Yes, do you mean I found a tutor? It's a tutoring centre.]

A：對，那...那...妳可以更具體的說一下，他幫妳做了些什麼...[Yes, so... could you be more specific about how the tutor helped you with respect to the assignment?].

B：這個會不會影響到(猶豫)...[Will this affect my...? (Hesitant)]

A：不會。[No]

B：是嗎？[Really?]

A：對。[No, it won't affect your status.]

B：就是比如說...首先他可能就是大家講一下這個星期老師教了什麼單元這樣。[So... for example, he taught us what units the professor has covered this week...]

A：喔，他知道老師教什麼喔？[Oh? He knew what the professor has taught?]

B：我們會把那個 Slides 發給他，因為他要教我們，他肯定要知道我們講義啊。[Yes, We are sending him the slides, so that he knew what happened during class.]

A：OK。[Okay]

B：然後你有不懂，你可以問他，然後就是會有作業嘛，他就大概老師的要求寫一份樣本出來。[And if you have questions, you can ask him. And you know... we have assignments, he will write a sample assignment based on the assignment instructions.]

A：喔，OK。[Oh, okay]

B：對。[Yes]

- ...
- A：所以那樣本就是那個 Python、那個...[So when you speak about sample, do you mean you he gave you a sample specifically for Python coding?]
- B：就是一個很 Basic 的一個 Codes，然後因為你要再按照他給你具體的要求，你每個人寫的都不一樣嘛，你要再去這個地方，自己怎麼寫啊，想一想、改一改就這樣子。[Yea, the codes are very basic. You need to follow the assignment instructions very specifically because presumably everybody will write different codes. So when you get the sample, you also need to modify the sample slightly...]
- A：OK，妳...只有妳還是...妳有其他同學也差不多這樣子？[Okay, so... since you hired a tutor, have you been aware of anyone who did the same thing?]
- B：據我所知，百分之七十的中國人吧，中國人，都...就是上這個課都有去找 Tutor。[My best knowledge is around 70% of Chinese students hired a tutor for the course]
- A：都有找 Tutor? [They all hired a tutor?]
- B：對，因為這個課如果真的不找 Tutor，除非是你真的對 Computer Science，你很專，不然我覺得還挺難的。[Yes, for this class, if you didn't hire a tutor, unless you are super good at computer science, otherwise, it would be very hard!]
- A：還真的蠻難的。[Yes, I know. It's hard...]
- B：因為你真的要花時間，但是我們...拿這種課的目的就是，為了容易嘛，省時間嘛，又可以拿高分，那、那肯定就不願意去花那麼多時間在這個上，除非你真的是喜歡，那就這樣子。[Because you need to spend time, but for us, the reason why we took this course is to get our GPA higher, it is easy and saves some time, and we can get a high mark just by hiring a tutor. If we hired a tutor and we could not get the result we want, then we wouldn't have spent time on it. Unless you really like it, then it's a totally different story]
- A：OK，那...那除了這個以外，那...妳有沒有...發現說有幾些...有一些課特別難，那妳必須要找外面的人協助？就只有這一門課嗎？[Okay, in addition to this course, have you discovered any classes, which are super hard, and you need to find assistance from outside?]
- B：等一下好像...也有過。[Wait... yes.]
- A：嗯嗯。[Okay]
- B：是什麼課呢？[Do I need to tell you what classes?]
- A：妳不用告訴我什麼課，大概哪一個領域的課。[You don't need to specify, just tell me the discipline...]
- B：也是 Econ 的課，喔對，之前有一個就是 Accounting 的課。[Econ, and yes, there was one accounting course that I hired a tutor for...]
- A：Accounting，OK。
- B：那個真的是我...。[That's... really... WT...]
- A：(笑)Accounting 200 嗎？[(Laugh) Accounting 200?]
- B：200、250 我都上了。[200 and 250 I took them all]
- A：OK。[okay]
- B：就是...對這兩個課...200 我是一開始就找 Tutor，250 我想跟 200 應該沒什麼區別，我就沒有找，但是我後來發現我還是應該找人。[Yes, for Accounting 200, at the beginning, I hired a tutor, but for 250, I think it made no difference between these two courses, so I didn't hire a tutor, but later I regretted it, I should have hired a tutor for 250.]
- A：(笑)所以妳沒找？[So you didn't end up hiring one for 250?]

B：我沒找，然後我就很後悔。[No, and I was super regretful]

A：那、那...200 那 Tutor 幫妳什麼？[Then what did the 200 tutor do for you?]

B：他就幫我們做題。[He did the questions for us.]

A：喔。[Oh]

B：就是因為他那個...我覺得可能第一個真的是你要做很多次去練習它吧，然後再來就是有的它什麼概念，就是真的不懂啊，那我怎麼辦，就是...我自己看書。[So at first, for this course, you really need to practice the problems. And furthermore, there are some concepts that will confuse me, but what can I do? Just read the textbook?]

A：GAAP 概念。[I remember that course is mainly addressing GAAP in accounting...]

B：喔，我已經忘了，反正...對，他就是幫我們做題，這個地方怎麼樣，你要注意哪些點就是...幫你去...了解。[Oh, I forgot them all, after all. He helped us solve the problems and some places where we need to be aware of...]

A：釐清一些概念。[So basically just clarify some concepts?]

B：對，理清楚。[Yes... to clarify the concepts]

A：喔，那、那所以這很好玩，就是妳寧願花錢去找別的老師來，也不去問 TA。[So I found it interesting. You'd rather spend time hiring a tutor than just asking your TA...]

B：嗯哼，就是有一個什麼問題，可能就是...語言方面的問題。[Yea, the reason might be... language.]

A：語言方面的問題。[Language?]

B：因為有的時候...確實你問那個 TA，就...有...TA 會出現那種什麼情況就是...非常有趣的，你問他他說，呃...這個我也不太清楚，你不如去問 Professor 吧。我就...那、那...好吧那沒辦法。[Sometimes, it is very interesting. when you asked TA a question, then TA will say that he or she is not really sure, maybe you should go to the professor.... Then I was like, okay, I have nothing to do...]

A：那你在這幹嘛...[Then what's the point of having a TA?]

B：對，我就覺得很奇怪，我就在想是不是...什麼人都能當 TA，那我也去當個 TA 吧，反正我就說你去問老師，我不知道就好。[Yea, I was wondering the qualifications of TA... I can just be a TA, and I can refer anyone to the professor...]



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