

DETECTING PLAGIARISM AND CONTRACT CHEATING: NEW ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CHALLENGES

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Abstract: In recent years, cases of academic and non-academic plagiarism, scientific integrity and misconduct have attracted general attention worldwide. Despite the recent technical and methodological developments in the field, detecting some instances of plagiarism (e.g. paraphrase- and translation-based plagiarism) and contract cheating remains a challenge. Since essay mills claim to sell plagiarism-free essays whose detection is missed by ordinary plagiarism detection software, new detection methods are required. This paper addresses academic and scientific misconduct detection, by proposing a forensic linguistic analysis of student plagiarised texts to identify shifts in the writing style of the author that may be indicative of third party authorship. Since, for ethical reasons, no purchased essays could be used, the method was tested using a set of naturally-occurring student plagiarised texts from different academic fields that are part of the CorRUPT corpus (own Corpus of Reused and Plagiarised Texts). The promising results of the analysis of text statistics (e.g. word/ sentence/ paragraph length, type-token ratio, and lexical richness) and structural features (e.g. typography, orthography, morphology, syntax, and word order) show how ghost writing can be unveiled using methods of forensic authorship and plagiarism analysis. The paper concludes by discussing the relevance of combining more traditional and more experimental methods to detect translation-based plagiarism, and by identifying innovative applications of the methods showcased.

Key words: Plagiarism, translingual plagiarism, contract cheating, essay mills, academic integrity, forensic linguistics

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