



Foreign Languages and the Edition Dilemma: Is Tutoring out of Control?

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Abstract

Although academic dishonesty has received considerable attention in recent years, there is little research on how non-serious cheating issues in a discipline such as biology or chemistry can be highly serious offenses in the Foreign Languages (FLs). One of those “gray areas” is (unauthorized) edition by a tutor and/or a native speaker.

Given that a substantial part (if not all) of the grade in a FL assignment is language usage (be it grammar, vocabulary, spelling, or organization), any assistance received that improves linguistic form (and as a consequence the student’s grade) should be considered as act of punishable academic dishonesty. Still, it is not uncommon for language instructors to come across papers that contain advanced linguistic forms or colloquialisms that do not belong to the linguistic repertoire of the student who “wrote” it [1].

In this talk I will address the following questions: is the use of a tutor/native speaker accidental plagiarism [2], pseudepigraphy [3], or ‘contract cheating’[4]? Who is at fault and what should the penalty be? How can it be prevented or minimized? Should students be allowed to have tutors at all? Is there a double standard when it comes to graduate students and faculty?

References

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