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Plagiarism: The murky waters of copying and citing

John Blake

Institute of General Education
Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology

Abstract

This paper focuses on the key difficulty inherent in securing conference presentations which lead to the possibility to publish in the associated proceedings. The ability to write great abstracts, broadly defined as those that successfully secure a conference place, is vital to the development of a career in academia, and in turn the capability to construct compelling abstracts boosts the likelihood of getting published. The degree of mastery over the craft of constructing abstracts that academics can gain through reading journal abstracts is an important aspect in this process. Through forensic analysis of abstracts and follow-up interviews with both postgraduate students and newly appointed faculty in Hong Kong, it was discovered that plagiarism was rife. Many academics in the study were found to have plagiarized their own earlier abstracts and those who were bilingual tended to plagiarize from abstracts written in their other language. Reviewing this and other studies of the abstract writing of academics at the start of their career, it concludes by arguing that reliance on tried and tested models or templates and a significant amount of crafty copying, cutting and changing gives academics the impetus to cope more effectively with this genre of writing while swimming in those murky waters of copying and changing rather than copying and citing.