

Answers to plagiarism cases:

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Case 1

The plagiarism in this case is quite hard to detect at first, because there is no plagiarism of words – just about all the words have been changed. On closer inspection however, it is clear that the ideas and the structure of the arguments have been copied from Joycoy and DiBiase without credit. Another interesting aspect is that while they do give credit to Martin and Cabe for one fact, this is exactly the same fact that Joycoy and DiBiase use, so it seems that this is just another copying of the work done by Joycoy and DiBiase.

I. Have any of the following been taken from another work?

Ideas

Yes – all the ideas, the order of the ideas, the reasoning and structure of the argument in the above paragraph belong to Joycoy and DiBiase. This has not been acknowledged. There is also an idea from Cabe and Martin, which has been acknowledged, however, see below under “Other”.

Methods

No

Words/text

No. Just about all the words have been changed apart from [is, the, of, of, plagiarism, (Cabe, n.d.; Martin, 1994), or, changing, to, idea.] So there is no real plagiarism of words, which makes the real plagiarism harder to detect.

Images

No

Other

While the fact that researchers have identified different forms of plagiarism has been acknowledged to be the thoughts of Cabe and Martin, the fact that it was Cabe and Martin who noted this, has been taken from Joycoy and DiBiase, unless the student also read Cabe and Martin, which seems unlikely given the structure of the argument being so similar. In other words, what was stolen here was a reference!

Summary: Plagiarism of ideas, plagiarism of reference

Case 2

This case also involves plagiarism but for almost the opposite reason as Case 1. The ideas have been taken from Martini and Bartholomew, but this has been acknowledged so it does not constitute plagiarism. However, the words and language have been copied without using quotation marks. An interesting aspect here is that the plagiarism is hard to detect on first reading because the student uses the chemical symbols instead of the names of the chemicals. The student should either have used quotation marks to give credit for another person's words, or should have paraphrased better. See the two appropriate paraphrased versions below.

I. Have any of the following been taken from another work?

Ideas

Yes, the ideas are all from Martini and Bartholomew and this has been acknowledged. So on this aspect there is no plagiarism. It might be stated even more directly if the paragraph was introduced with the words, "Martini and Bartholomew (1997:204) report that..."

Words/text

Yes, Roig¹ points out that while the student's version initially seems to be rewritten in his own words, the changes made are in fact too superficial, the rewritten text is too similar to the original and that therefore it constitutes an inappropriate paraphrasing. And while the writer has credited Martini and Bartholomew for the ideas, he has not done so for the words, language and structure (quotation marks would have been the appropriate way of showing this, if he did not want to rewrite it into his own words) and the reader is being misled to believe that the words, language and structure are the student's own. All the student has in fact done is change the word order of the first two sentences as well as change the names of the chemicals Sodium and Potassium in to their abbreviated version Na and K. Looking past this, reveals the similarity between the two versions:

Original

Because the intracellular concentration of potassium ions is relatively high, potassium ions tend to diffuse out of the cell. This movement is driven by the concentration gradient for potassium ions. Similarly, the concentration gradient for sodium ions tends to promote their movement into the cell. However, the cell membrane is significantly more permeable to potassium ions than to sodium ions. As a result, potassium ions diffuse out of the cell faster than sodium ions enter the cytoplasm. The cell therefore experiences a net loss of positive charges, and as a result the interior of the cell membrane contains an excess of negative charges, primarily from negatively charged proteins.²

Student's version

The concentration gradient for sodium ions tends to promote their movement into the cell. Similarly, the high intracellular concentration of potassium ions is relatively high resulting in potassium's tendency to diffuse out of the cell. Because the cell membrane is significantly more permeable to potassium than to sodium, potassium diffuses out of the cell faster than sodium enters the cytoplasm. The cell therefore experiences a net loss of positive charges and, as a result the interior of the cell membrane now has an excess of negative charges, primarily from negatively charged proteins. (Martini & Bartholomew, 1997: 204).

Summary: Plagiarism of words, language, structure

¹ Roig, M. (n.d.) *Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing*. [Online], retrieved March 31, 2011 from <http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/plagiarism/>

² Martini, F. H. & Bartholomew, M. S. (1997). *Essentials of Anatomy and Physiology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

Roig then provides two possible **appropriate paraphrases** of the Martini and Bartholomew work.

Version 1

A textbook of anatomy and physiology² reports that the concentration of potassium ions inside of the cell is relatively high and, consequently, some potassium tends to escape out of the cell. Just the opposite occurs with sodium ions. Their concentration outside of the cell causes sodium ions to cross the membrane into the cell, but they do so at a slower rate. According to these authors, this is because the permeability of the cell membrane is such that it favors the movement of potassium relative to sodium ions. Because the rate of crossing for potassium ions that exit the cell is higher than that for sodium ions that enter the cell, the inside portion of the cell is left with an overload of negatively charged particles, namely, proteins that contain a negative charge.

² Martini, F. H. & Bartholomew, M. S. (1997). *Essentials of Anatomy and Physiology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

Version 2

The relatively high concentration gradient of sodium ions outside of the cell causes them to enter into the cell's cytoplasm. In a similar fashion, the interior concentration gradient of potassium ions is also high and, therefore, potassium ions tend to scatter out of the cell through the cell's membrane. But, a notable feature of this process is that Potassium ions tend to leave the cell faster than sodium ions enter the cytoplasm. This is because of the nature of the cell membrane's permeability, which allows potassium ions to cross much more freely than sodium ions. The end result is that the interior of the cell membrane's loss of positive charges results in a greater proportion of negative charges and these made up mostly of proteins that have acquired a negative charge.²

² Martini, F. H. & Bartholomew, M. S. (1997). *Essentials of Anatomy and Physiology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

Case 3

This is an interesting case in that it shows how not only words but the logic and order of an argument can be plagiarized. The student should simply have acknowledged that his two sentences were a summary of Kaplan's work

I. Have any of the following been taken from another work?

Ideas

Yes. What has been borrowed here is a combination of someone else's ideas, their structure of argument, logic, pattern and organisation. No credit has been given for this.

Words/text

No

Summary: Plagiarism of argument, logic, pattern and organisation

Case 4

This is another example of inappropriate paraphrasing, similar to Case 2.

This answer, like the case example itself, is taken verbatim from Roig³:

The first sentence of the rewritten version is probably an acceptable paraphrase of the first sentence in the original paragraph. However, with the exception of a minor transposition of words in the last sentence, the rest of the sentences have only been superficially changed by the addition or substitution of a few words at the beginning of each sentence. The remaining phrases in these sentences have not changed. ...None of the sentences in the rewritten paragraph are totally identical to their counterparts in the original. Because there is still a significant amount of verbatim material taken from the original, the rewritten version would still be deemed as an example of plagiarism.

ORIGINAL VERSION

"This study examines whether **workers of *S. invicta*** are able to **assist their mothers in colony usurpations**. First we tested **whether [queens] of *S. invicta* are better able to usurp colonies to which their daughters have moved**. Second, **we tested whether the effect of daughters on usurpation success is due to familiarity with the queen or to genetic relatedness**. Aggressive behavior during these usurpation attempts was observed to determine if the presence of familiar or related workers influenced the aggressive response toward either the resident queen or the queen attempting usurpation."

PLAGIARIZED VERSION

To determine whether **workers of *S. invicta*** can **assist their mothers in colony usurpations**, two researchers have conducted a study in which the following hypotheses were tested: First, they wanted to see **whether queens of *S. invicta* are better able to usurp colonies to which their daughters have moved**. Second, they tested **whether the effect of daughters on usurpation success is due to familiarity with the queen or to genetic relatedness**. The ants' aggressive behavior during these usurpation attempts was observed to determine if the presence of related or familiar workers influenced the aggressive response toward either the resident queen or the queen attempting a colony take-over

Case 5

What this case illustrates is how one can also plagiarise the paraphrasing of one author by another. Quoting the same facts or words from a third source, even where the third source is acknowledged will constitute plagiarism, if you do not acknowledge that you have done this. It is quite tempting for students to quote or refer to another work, without having read the work themselves. This constitutes dishonest practice and theft of someone else's interpretation of a third work.

Find examples in this case study of

I. identical paraphrasing of another author in the original and plagiarised text:

Kubota writes that this **could leave schools open to lawsuits of infringements of students' First Amendment rights. Filters may also increase liability by claiming that they can keep students out of objectionable sites when in fact there is no way to guarantee that** (McKenzie, 1996).

The student gives credit to Kubota and McKenzie, but what has been used here is also the paraphrasing by Pownell and Bailey. No acknowledgement is given and the student misleads the reader to think that she had read the original works and paraphrased them herself.

³ Roig, M. (n.d.) *Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing*. [Online], retrieved March 31, 2011 from <http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/plagiarism/>

2. identical quotes from another author the original and plagiarised text:

Unfortunately for schools, most companies keep their lists of sites secret. McCullagh (1998) noted that "with the exception of Net Nanny, every other censorware manufacturer treats its blacklist of thousands of forbidden sites as a trade secret and refuses to divulge its contents" (p. 5).

This quote is identical to the one in the original work. It may seem strange to call this plagiarism when the student has given credit to McCullagh for the words. However, the student is misleading the reader – selecting a quote and building it into your argument is an intellectual activity. The student has taken the intellectual contribution by Pownell and Bailey without acknowledging it thereby misleading the reader.

3. improper quoting techniques/citations

Parents and educators fear for the safety and well-being of students. These fears have persuaded many that the Internet needs control, and software filtering is a good way to do it. Most of the time, however, little thought is given to who controls the way that filters work and what the agendas of the filtering software manufacturers are (Pownell & Bailey, 1998).

Here the student finally gives credit to Pownell and Bailey for their idea, but she has used their exact words and gives no indication of this (through using quotation marks if she did not want to rephrase). Many people focus on this aspect of plagiarism (correct quoting techniques) but as can be seen from the first 2 examples, plagiarism involves all cases where the reader is misled (intentionally or unintentionally).

Case 6

There are no real right or wrong answers to the following two questions. Some suggestions have been made. Do you agree? Can you think of more causes and effects of this kind of behaviour?

1. What are the causes of this type of behaviour?

- Pressure to secure funds – scientists often do not have enough funding for research. There is increasing competition for limited funds from research agencies. This pressure might encourage some to try to get funds at all costs/at the cost of another.
- One of the key motivators for researchers is often individual recognition within a strong hierarchy. This might encourage a culture of unhealthy competition among researchers and create pressure to stay at the top of the hierarchy.
- Power imbalances could lead to abuses. Perhaps in this case the referee was an established researcher and the applicant a newcomer. This might have led to a much mistaken impression that it is not wrong or that he could get away with it.
- Many researchers report that they inadvertently use the ideas of others, thinking that they themselves came up with the idea and forgetting that they got it from elsewhere. This seems unlikely in this case, as the researcher in question was asked to referee the application and must have made some conscious conclusions about the methodology in question.

2. What is the impact of such behaviour?

- Perpetuates a culture of mistrust, competition and hierarchy
- Leads to lack of co-operation between scientists that could have led to richer science.
- It takes away the recognition that should rightfully go to the original author/creator of the idea
- It misleads the public, thus creating mistrust in science in general.

References

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Resources

The RCR Educational Resources webpage <http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/> contains a number of materials that may be used freely (indicated by an asterisk).

For a discussion of self plagiarism, including double dipping, salami slicing, data augmentation, etc please see Miguel Roig's article at <http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/plagiarism/>