

Research Misconduct – Chair: Dr. Thed van Leeuwen

13. Ghostbusting the Writer Academic. Ghostwriting in Germany — A Quantitative Study

Tony Franzky (University of Freiburg)

Fabian Bross (University of Stuttgart)

Fabian Dirscherl (University of Stuttgart)

Beside fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, academic ghostwriting is one of the main issues on research on academic integrity. In these cases, unmasking and verifying the real author is one of the most difficult challenges. Methods of forensic linguistics are considered as effortful and not very reliable, because of comparatively small corpora for comparison and less dependability in cases of peer-ghostwriter-longterm-maintenance. Also, strategies to supervise the progress of writing by demanding learning journals and having regular meetings do not provide an absolute security since ghostwriting agencies also offer services like coaching for oral examinations and additional research documentation.

Notably, discussions about the topic of ghostwriting are underrepresented in academic research. Being more specific: In contemporary discussion are only a few publications on this topic but focusing aspects like analyses of market access and professional environment in a nonacademic perspective (e.g. Klinghammer 2007; Shaw 1991), production strategies (Lyons 2014), nonacademic contract work as speechwriting or biography writing (Starr 2006; Pitt 1984; Einhorn 1988; Seeger 2009), legal aspects of ghostwriting in perspective of copyright and intellectual property rights (Stolz 1971; Planta 1998) or general aspects of the theoretical discussion (Mielke 1995).

As already mentioned, main parts of the monographic publications originate from a nonacademic field and thus, are only restrictedly suitable for discussion. Furthermore, empirical studies are few and far between. Therefore topics are, for example, normative values of ghostwriting (Knapp und Hulbert 2017; Rothermich 1998; Wnukiewicz-Kozłowska 2011), systematic analyses of online offers or quality of top rated ghostwriting services like Lines (2016). However, there does not seem to

exist a broad range of studies on ghostwriting services with a scientific or academic background. This is aggravated by the problem of social desirability and as a consequence a lot of classical methods of empirical social research like interviews or questionnaires fail to provide results or provide biased results. Nevertheless, for a couple of years, it is observable that writing services are also provided via internet and can equally be bought through online auctions.

Using this possibility, we attempt to close the aforementioned research gap on ghostwriting utilization: It was possible for us to extract the public available online auctions of a huge German ghostwriting online agency and analyze this data in respect of questions like the quantitative demand of ghostwriting ordered by areas of study, qualitative and quantitative extent of ghostwriting and

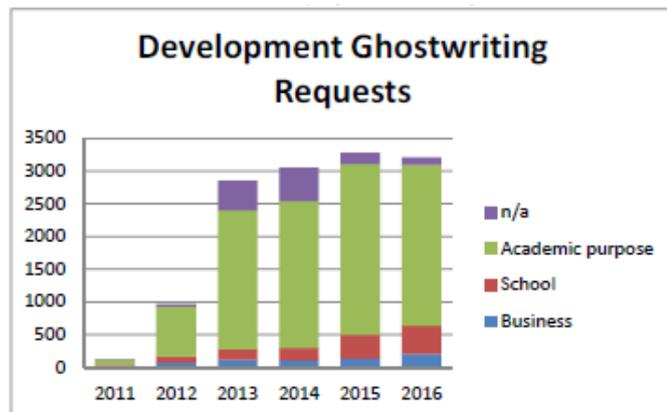


Table 1: Ghostwriting requests at the investigated platform (n=13484)

affected levels of qualification. The first data analysis shows, that the number of ghostwriting is increasing since release of the platform. On basis of these highly comprehensive and diverse datasets (about 30.000 sets), it was possible to start a quantitative analysis with underlying qualitative aspects to give evidence about ghostwriting in Germany. Especially educational background of ghostwriters, types of requests for writing jobs, periods of time for fulfilling ghostwriting jobs, scientific background and level of qualification of customers and few other aspects. The work in hand will show focus areas on ghostwriting and ghostwriters as well as ghostwriting demands and how they are fulfilled and will give a brief insight on the ghostwriting market in Germany.

Seeger, Matthew W. (2009): Ghostbusting: Exorcising the great man spirit from the speechwriting debate. In: *Communication Education* 34 (4), S. 353–358. DOI: 10.1080/03634528509378628.

Shaw, Eva (1991): *Ghostwriting: How to get into the business*. New York: The Paragon House.

Starr, Douglas Perret (2006): *Speech ghostwriting. Crafting effective speeches for other people*. Oak

Park, IL: Marion Street Press.

Stolz, Hansjörg (1971): *Der Ghostwriter im deutschen Recht*. Dissertation. Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Tübingen. Rechtswissenschaften.

Wnukiewicz-Kozłowska, Agata (2011): Legal and ethical aspects of ghostwriting in medicine. In: *Archivum immunologiae et therapiae experimentalis* 59 (1), S. 1–9. DOI: 10.1007/s00005-010-0105-y.