



Course: Study Skills

Level: First year LMD

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Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Objectives of the Lesson: by the end of this lecture, learners will be able to:

- Make a clear distinction between summarising and paraphrasing.
- Use these strategies effectively in their learning

Introduction

Students need to use summarising and paraphrasing in different occasions. Yet, many of them do not know how to use them without falling into the trap of plagiarism. Summarizing and paraphrasing are regarded difficult skills for students to master because they require active reading, effective comprehension and accurate reproduction of the original text.

1. Definition of Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing refers to the process of reproducing the original text in the writer's own words. Bowker (2007, p. 13) defines paraphrasing as a process where the writer "restate information using different words. Unlike summarizing, paraphrasing

focuses less on shortening and condensing the information. Paraphrasing aims to rewrite the information by drawing on different words and phrases”.

An Example of Paraphrasing

Original

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon in April (probably April 23), 1564. His father was a citizen of some prominence who became an alderman and bailiff, but who later suffered financial reverses. Shakespeare presumably attended the Stratford grammar school, where he could have acquired a respectable knowledge of Latin, but he did not proceed to Oxford or Cambridge. There are legends about Shakespeare’s youth but no documented facts.

Paraphrase

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon. His father, a respected alderman, and bailiff was an affluent community member but later lost his financial security. Experts suspect that Shakespeare went to the Stratford grammar school where he probably obtained a command of the Latin language, however, since there are no documented facts about his childhood, scholars rely on rumors and stories believed to be historically accurate. They do know that he did not continue his education at Oxford or Cambridge.

Since paraphrasing is restating a passage in simpler language, learners are required to read the text carefully, understand its meaning and then rewrite it in their own words. This process will help them improve both their reading and writing skills.

It is very important to remember that the well-written paraphrase has the same meaning as the original text and is approximately the same length

Learners need to consider the following points:

a. Preview and read. Preview and read the passage closely. You will need to read the passage three or four times for thorough understanding.

b. Underline the key words. Underlining key words will help you decide what is important in each sentence and, consequently, in the entire passage. Remember to look up any words you do not know.

c. Rewrite the passage in your own words. Go through the selection and rewrite each sentence, using different words with the same meaning.

d. Read the paraphrase aloud, correcting any mistakes. To check for a well-written paraphrase, ask yourself the following questions:

- ➡ Is the paraphrase approximately the same length as the original passage?
- ➡ Has any part of the passage been copied word for word? (If so, then you must rewrite this part.)
- ➡ Does the paraphrase have the same meaning as the passage?

2. Definition of Summarizing

Summarizing is an effective strategy to draw up the main ideas out of a text by reproducing them in a shorter version using the students' own words. It involves presenting an overview of a text by omitting superfluous details and retaining only the key essence of the ideas conveyed.

Summaries leave out details or examples that may distract the reader from the most important information, and they simplify complex arguments, grammar and vocabulary.

Summarizing helps improve both your reading and writing skills. To summarize, learners need to read the text closely, find the main ideas and supporting ideas. Then they should briefly write down those ideas in a few sentences or a paragraph. It is quite important to distinguish between a summary and a paraphrase. Awhile a paraphrase is rewriting of a text in your own words, a summary focuses only on the main ideas. In order to present a well-written summary, the students must consider the following points:

- a. Preview and read. Preview and read the paragraph closely. You probably will find that you need to read the paragraph more than one time.
- b. Make a list or outline. Determine the main idea and the supporting details of the paragraph. Make a list or outline of these ideas. Be sure to use your own words.
- c. Write a summary. Using your list, write a summary of the paragraph. State the main ideas, followed by important ideas. Limit your summary to just one or two sentences.

d. Read aloud and correct. Read the summary aloud, correcting any mistakes.

An Example of Summarizing

Original “The Northern Lights”

There are times when the night sky glows with bands of color. The bands may begin as cloud shapes and then spread into a great arc across the entire sky. They may fall in folds like a curtain drawn across the heavens. The lights usually grow brighter, then suddenly dim. During this time the sky glows with pale yellow, pink, green, violet, blue, and red. These lights are called the Aurora Borealis. Some people call them the Northern Lights. Scientists have been watching them for hundreds of years. They are not quite sure what causes them. In ancient times, people were afraid of the Lights. They imagined that they saw fiery dragons in the sky. Some even concluded that the heavens were on fire.

Summary

The Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights, are bands of color in the night sky. Ancient people thought that these lights were dragon on fire, and even modern scientists are not sure what they are.

Used correctly, summarizing and paraphrasing can save time, increase understanding, and give authority and credibility to your work. Both tools are useful when the precise wording of the original communication is less important than its overall meaning.

Practice

- ☞ Why is it important to paraphrase or summarise?
- ☞ Paraphrase and summarise the following text.

The difference between humor and laughter is that humor is a perceptual process while laughter is a behavioral response. People of all ages and cultures respond to humor. The majority of people are able to experience humor, i.e., to be amused, to laugh or smile at something funny, and thus they are considered to have a sense of humor. The hypothetical person lacking a sense of humor would likely find the behavior induced by humor to be inexplicable, strange, or even irrational. Though ultimately decided by personal taste, the extent to which a person will find something humorous depends upon a host of variables, including geographical location, culture, maturity, level of education, intelligence and context.