The Impact of AI Paraphrasing Tools on the Paraphrasing Skills of Filipino ESL Students

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Abstract: In this age of AI-assisted teaching and learning, there seems to be an overdependence on artificial intelligence among ESL learners, not only in accomplishing routine writing assignments, but even in writing academic papers such as thesis and dissertation. This in-depth qualitative inquiry into the challenges encountered by ESL Filipino students in paraphrasing academic texts is part of a descriptive qualitative linguistic analysis of student-generated paraphrased academic texts and paraphrasing strategies, which revealed that participants resort to synonymous substitutions, with no significant change in the structural features of the original, leading to paraphrasing errors involving partial to total semantic loss. Results show that the failure to paraphrase effectively is consistent across all levels, namely senior high school, college, and graduate students. To probe into the challenges and difficulties experienced by the study participants, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted. Three major themes emerged from the FGD: (1) The Challenge of Preserving Semantic Content and Fidelity; (2) The Best Words in the Best Order: Grappling with the Lexico-semantic and Morphosyntactic Demands of Paraphrasing; (3) Contending with Limited Vocabulary, Poor Comprehension and Lack of Practice Due to Overdependence on AI Paraphrasing Tools. A pedagogical paradigm was designed based on the major findings of the study for a sustainable instructional intervention.

Key words: AI paraphrasing tools, paraphrasing errors, paraphrasing strategies

Abstrak: Di era pengajaran dan pembelajaran dengan bantuan AI ini, tampaknya ada ketergantungan yang berlebihan pada kecerdasan buatan di antara pelajar ESL, tidak hanya dalam menyelesaikan tugas menulis rutin, tetapi bahkan dalam menulis karya ilmiah seperti tesis dan disertasi. Penyelidikan kualitatif mendalam tentang tantangan yang dihadapi oleh siswa ESL Filipina dalam memparafrasekan teks akademis ini adalah bagian dari analisis linguistik kualitatif deskriptif terhadap teks akademis parafrase yang dibuat oleh siswa dan strategi parafrase, yang mengungkapkan bahwa para peserta menggunakan substitusi sinonim, tanpa perubahan signifikan pada fitur struktural dari teks asli, yang menyebabkan kesalahan parafrase yang melibatkan hilangnya sebagian atau seluruh semantik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegagalan dalam memparafrasekan secara efektif konsisten di semua tingkatan, yaitu siswa sekolah menengah atas, mahasiswa, dan mahasiswa pascasarjana. Untuk menyelidiki tantangan dan kesulitan yang dialami oleh para peserta penelitian, sebuah Focus Group Discussion (FGD) dilakukan. Tiga tema besar muncul dari FGD: (1) Tantangan Mempertahankan Konten dan Kesesuaian Semantik; (2) Kata-kata Terbaik dalam Urutan Terbaik: Bergulat dengan Tuntutan Leksikosemantik dan Morfosintaksis dalam Parafrase; (3)

Bersaing dengan Kosakata yang Terbatas, Pemahaman yang Buruk, dan Kurangnya Latihan Karena Ketergantungan yang Berlebihan pada Alat Parafrase AI. Sebuah paradigma pedagogis dirancang berdasarkan temuan utama dari penelitian ini untuk intervensi instruksional yang berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: *Alat-alat parafrase AI, kesalahan parafrase, strategi paraphrase*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial skills in academic writing which students need to master is paraphrasing. Using paraphrase as a writing technique to express thoughts created in a certain text in various ways while maintaining the original source's meaning has been seen as an important academic technique used in tertiary education to help individual students incorporate source texts into their own words. Paraphrasing is defined as the use of alternate language expressions to communicate the same meaning in a sentence (Dias et al., 2010 as cited in Alaofi, 2020). Blanplain (2008, as cited in Tran & Nguyen, 2022) defines paraphrasing as a strategy of changing the way concepts are presented in a text section while maintaining the same thoughts similar to the original. The implication here is that their meanings are similar, yet language and syntax differ. Nguyen et al. (2019) pointed out that paraphrasing involves reworking the source texts in a different structure rather than merely using synonyms in place of words. Instead of merely replacing words with synonyms, paraphrasing is distinguished by the use of various sentence patterns (Blanpain, 2008 as cited in Tran & Nguyen, 2022).

For the majority of students, paraphrasing is a major challenge. In a study by Liao and Tseng (2010, cited in Maiyoritsa, 2021), they found that although students had already learned about paraphrasing in their EFL writing class, undergraduate EFL students were unable to produce acceptable paraphrased texts. This is due to the fact that they lack the experience or practice of using their paraphrasing skills to their own work, and they also lack knowledge of effective paraphrasing techniques. In a study conducted among Indonesian students on students' problems in paraphrasing, Khairunnisa et al. (2014) concluded that students tend to copy the structure of the original text and resort to synonymous substitutes because they apparently lack an understanding of good paraphrasing and they lack knowledge of precise vocabulary.

According to Andriani & Permatasari (2024), paraphrasing in a second or foreign language is often thought to be more challenging than it is in one's mother tongue. This is particularly true for language learners who are new to the academic setting. There are two main reasons why L2 English learners fail to paraphrase successfully, according to studies on their paraphrasing habits. Explanations include inadequate language skills and a lack of knowledge of the value of paraphrasing and effective methods (Di Zhang 2020; Alaofi, 2020; Ramsden, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; Silalahi, 2024). Additionally, a number of researchers have explored the difficulties L2 learners have in paraphrasing in terms of their cultural views about texts (e.g., Di Zhang & Yu, 2023; Du & Liu, 2024; Al-Shredi, 2024; Zahra, 2024). Particularly, in some cultures, knowledge is regarded as a social asset that anybody may use. Hence, it is seen preferable to copy portions of original writings in order to gain knowledge for their own goals (Sharah, 2024).

In view of these difficulties and challenges, academic writing and research teachers continue to stress the need to avoid plagiarism. In order to avoid plagiarism and to succeed in academic writing in English, it is recommended that students learn how to produce or reiterate the key

ideas from a certain text passage while maintaining the key meanings of the source. However, despite the recommendations, encouragement, and training, many students engaged in academic writing and research still resort to copying and pasting original texts because they apparently have not acquired or mastered the skill of paraphrasing.

With the Turnitin application now being utilized to address the issue of plagiarism in colleges and universities, students are becoming more resourceful in exploiting Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to their advantage. Students are now turning to paraphrasing apps instead of manually rewording original texts. Baxter (2024) published in his website a list of 10 best paraphrasing apps for academic writing: Prepostseo, Enzipe, Enzipe Rephrase, Article Rewriter, and Articlerewriter.spinner. Grammarly also has a paraphrasing app and there is also Quillbot.com. But despite the plethora of AI-assisted paraphrasing applications, this does not solve the problem of students' poor paraphrasing skill; on the contrary, this kind of technology is robbing students of the opportunity to practice their paraphrasing skill. This is particularly true among Filipino students enrolled in Academic English and research-related courses who are becoming increasingly dependent on paraphrasing apps such as Quillbot and Grammarly (Jacildo & Sumayo, 2024).

Numerous research on students' paraphrasing skills have been conducted (e.g., Bailey, 2021; Emran et al., 2024; Mohammad et al., 2024), as well as paraphrase detection approaches (Vrbanec & Mestrovic, 2023; Al Saqaabi, 2024; Iqbal et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025), but research literature seems to have a serious dearth in publication about manually-generated paraphrased academic texts produced by ESL students. This study aimed at filling this research gap by examining student-generated paraphrased academic texts and probing into the difficulties encountered by the students in generating paraphrases. Specifically, I intended to find the answer to the question, "What challenges and difficulties do students experience in the process of paraphrasing academic texts without the aid of AI paraphrasing tools?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

A.   Paraphrasing in the Second Language: Realities and Challenges

Bailey (2006 as cited in Cajamarca, 2024) advanced the notion that paraphrase entails modifying a text while keeping its meaning. According to these definitions, a text that has been paraphrased nevertheless conveys its meaning while using different lexical and syntactic elements from the original. Another thing to note is that paraphrasing does not reduce the amount of text, which sets paraphrasing apart from summarizing (Hirvela & Du, 2013 as cited in Aprianto & Ofara, 2024). According to Bailey (2017), a successful paraphrase maintains the intended idea even though the terminology is completely different. In this sense, Bailey provided three standards for an effective paraphrase: 1) They keep the meaning of the original, 2) are around the same length as the original, and 3) modify any appropriate vocabulary and syntax from the author's style to the reader's or writer's own style.

Wette (2010 as cited in Di Zhang, 2020) pointed out that L2 learners must employ sophisticated verbal and cognitive abilities to successfully paraphrase. To begin, they must correctly comprehend the text's meaning, which activates their reading ability. The next stage is to pick out key passages from the source material to change and accurately include them into

their writing (Alaofi, 2020). To achieve this transformation, suitable lexical items might be used in place of the ones found in the original text. Bailey (2006 as cited in Cajamarca, 2024) specifically recommended using synonyms (for instance, studies in place of research), changing the word class (for instance, in the mountains for mountainous regions), changing the word order (for instance, the collapse of Egyptian society began for Ancient Egypt collapsed), or a combination of all of the aforementioned techniques.

A case study conducted by Chi and Nguyen (2017) on Vietnamese learners of English taking academic writing class revealed that synonyms were used more frequently in the paraphrased texts of the group that could paraphrase well. Each piece of paraphrased writing has between 20 and 25 words and phrases that were changed to synonyms. Changing word forms was another method this group employed to paraphrase (e.g., nouns to verbs). Word form modifications occurred between 5 and 7 times in each paraphrased text. Interestingly, despite being taught as one of the paraphrasing approaches, the participants did not use various structures as frequently in their paraphrasing. Another group of students who struggled with paraphrasing either replicated the original sentences or substituted words that made the text's meaning unclear. Additionally, the participants considered utilizing a new structure, but it was not their preferred course of action. They admitted that they were unsure whether altering the text's syntactic structure would preserve the original meaning.

In a study on the paraphrasing techniques employed by Indonesian college students of English by Ismail et al. (2020), four common challenges were identified by the participants: 1) difficulty in finding out the appropriate synonym to change the word from the original text, 2) difficulty in understanding unfamiliar words, 3) confusion on how to restructure the sentence in a new style, and 4) failure to understand how to paraphrase. The researchers also identified the factors that contributed to these difficulties, which are as follows: 1) poor vocabulary, 2) no opportunity to practice the paraphrasing, 3) ineffective learning strategies, 4) the educator's teaching strategy, and 5) limited knowledge of paraphrasing techniques. These challenges are, in fact, very observable among Filipino ESL learners who are engaged in academic writing.

B.   Academic Writing and Plagiarism

Academic writing is defined as the process of creating a text using a complex combination of concept generation and idea selection (Bailer, 2015). As a result, it is possible to think of academic writing as a thought process or a set of arguments given in a logical sequence (Khazaal, 2019). Thus, academic writing entails outlining, condensing, and paraphrasing a written task with a focus on style and accuracy (Khazaal, 2019).

How academic writing affects students' learning outcomes as they learn the English language is a subject of considerable attention (Morley-Warner, 2010). In the literature, there are various perspectives on academic writing. Academic writing is a style of writing that is employed in tertiary writing courses because it requires a complex blending of concept generation and idea selection to produce a given document (Bailey, 2015). Another perspective holds that academic writing is connected to creating and considering how to convey knowledge of a specific subject or discipline to the intended audience through a set of norms or features (Mulyono et al., 2023; Barasa, 2024; Leijen & Jurine, 2024). These conceptualizations imply that academic writing serves as a guide that aids students in developing their writing abilities or academic performance. Academic writing is a necessary component of tertiary contexts in light of demands from the twenty-first century and can be a crucial tool for the development of the minds of people and

society (Dodd & Singh, 2023; Karimi & Khawaja, 2024). As academic writing is crucial to students' writing processes, and as intellectual integrity is expected of them, paraphrasing is one of the best approaches to support their academic writing success.

Due to the widespread attention that plagiarism in higher education has received, the literature examines a number of conceptualizations of plagiarism. According to Sozon & Alkharabsheh (2024), plagiarism is defined as "a failure to document...verbatim content, paraphrased information... and concepts specific to an author." The term "literary theft, or stealing the words," is another interpretation of plagiarism, or lifting the concepts of another person and presenting them as one's own without giving due credit to the author (Newman, 2019). As instances of plagiarism in academia have increased, paraphrase has been considered as a useful teaching strategy to combat plagiarism (Wibawa, 2024). Students are likely to have more opportunity to construct their own words using information from the source text if they paraphrase it properly and effectively while maintaining the source meaning (Sozon & Alkharabsheh, 2024).

A poor paraphrasing, however, is probably considered plagiarism. Because of this, altering the original statement by just a few words is insufficient, and such a straightforward rearrangement (using synonyms) is unlikely to demonstrate comprehension of the information provided in the original text itself (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). Teaching effective paraphrase helps to cut down on straight copying of source content. Similar to this, Kim et al. (2024) contend that paraphrasing is a plagiarism-prevention strategy used in writing essay assessments with Korean university students. Additionally, the benefit of paraphrasing is connected to a decrease in plagiarism (Sozon & Alkharabsheh, 2024). Three investigations were done as part of Roig's investigation into the criteria used by college and university teachers to identify plagiarism and paraphrase. In Study 1, plagiarism was found in six altered versions of a passage taken from a journal article. When a different sample of academics was asked to paraphrase the identical passage in Study 2, it was discovered that 30% had copied some of the text from the original. In the 3rd study, 26% of the psychologists used portions of the original text for their own purposes. All together, these research' findings suggest that college professors' approaches to paraphrasing vary greatly from one another.

METHOD

To probe into the challenges and difficulties experienced by the students in the process of paraphrasing original academic texts without the aid of AI paraphrasing tools, a semi-structured interview was conducted among selected participants using an inclusion criterion. A thematic description of the responses was, then, produced employing the thematic analysis procedure by Braun & Clarke (2023).

A.   Type of Research

Given the aim of this study, a descriptive qualitative design was utilized for the second phase of the study, which is a probe into the challenges encountered by students when paraphrasing manually. Descriptive research examines data that has already been collected with a predetermined research question (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). The goal of descriptive qualitative research, on the other hand, is frequently to describe, and researchers may then investigate the reasons behind the observations and the implications of the results (Bhandari,

2020). The qualitative approach entails examining natural objects or phenomena with the researcher acting as a key instrument. Data collection approaches are merged, data processing is inductive, and qualitative research findings further stress the relevance rather than a generalization (Packer, 2010).

B.   Research Subjects

The study involved a total of 85 purposively-selected participants composed of 30 Senior High School students enrolled in Practical Research 2, 30 tertiary level students from across five colleges enrolled in discipline-based research courses, and 25 graduate school students enrolled in academic writing. The participants are students officially enrolled in field-related research courses and academic writing for the Second Semester of Academic Year 2022-2023.

C.   Research Procedure

Data collection was conducted in two stages:

1.   <u>In-class Paraphrasing Exercise without the Use of AI Paraphrasing Tools</u>

Participants were informed that the paraphrasing exercise they were about to engage in is non-graded and would be allotted 60 minutes. They were also informed that the objective of the paraphrasing exercise is to help them improve their paraphrasing skill, hence it is a diagnostic exercise, not an assessment. Moreover, they were instructed to paraphrase without the use of AI paraphrasing tools. They were, then, informed that some of them would be selected for a focus group discussion after the exercise.

After the brief orientation, the participants were provided with a 150- to 200-word excerpt from a literature review related to their field of discipline and blank sheets of paper for their drafts. They were instructed to use the first 10 minutes to read and reread the text to gain a thorough understanding of its content. The next 30 minutes was allocated for the writing of the initial draft of the paraphrase and the last 20 minutes was devoted to reviewing, revising, and rewriting the paraphrased text. In the duration of the paraphrasing exercise, the participants were not allowed to use any electronic device. At the end of the allotted time, participants turned in their output to the researcher-facilitator.

After the paraphrase writing practice, student-generated paraphrased texts were examined to ascertain that the exercise outputs were completed and consistent with the given instructions. The paraphrased texts were, then, sorted in preparation for data coding and analysis (for the first phase of the study).

2.   <u>Post-writing Focus Group Discussion</u>

After the initial coding was performed to determine the challenges and difficulties of students in paraphrasing academic texts, the FGD participants were selected from each group to participate in a 30-minute FGD which centered on the challenges and difficulties encountered during the paraphrasing exercise. Inasmuch as the discussion was focused, the number of interview participants depended on the number of participants who experienced difficulty in paraphrasing. Participants whose outputs exhibited an extreme case of paraphrasing difficulties were included in the FGD. Extreme cases were selected from each sub-group: nine from senior high school level, ten from tertiary level, three from the master's degree program, and three from

the PhD program, a total of 25 participants. The FGD was done in three batches: senior high, tertiary level, graduate school level.

D. Validity and Reliability

To ensure that questions align with the study objective, a skilled facilitator was utilized during the conduct of the FGD to minimize bias and to keep the discussion focused. In addition, FGD participants were purposefully selected to represent the target population. To ensure content validity, a qualitative research specialist was employed to assess whether the questions are relevant. To ensure reliability, a standardized FGD guide was used across all groups. During the analysis stage, three intercoders coded the data independently and compared and discussed discrepancies with the aim of reaching an agreement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This is a discussion of the results of the FGD aimed at probing into the challenges and difficulties experienced by the participants in the process of paraphrasing academic text excerpts in real time and without the aid of artificial intelligence. Ultimately, the purpose of this phase of the study is to draw implications and insights on the impact of AI paraphrasing tools on the paraphrasing skills of ESL learners.

Employing Braun & Clarke's (2023) six-step process of familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up, the FGD responses were subjected to a thematic analysis after the recordings were transcribed. Themes were generated from exploratory comments during the initial coding and the major themes were defined and named after clustering and reviewing the emerging themes. Based on the participants' responses to the question, "What challenges and difficulties did you experience while paraphrasing the academic texts?" three major themes were identified:

A. Theme 1: The Challenge of Preserving Semantic Content and Fidelity

A recurring response from all the participants has to do with the difficulty of keeping the essential meaning of the original text so that their paraphrased output is faithful to the original (fidelity). Choosing the "right words" to use as a substitute for the original word without compromising the semantic content of the original text seems to be a major concern for the majority of the FGD participants. This is consistent with the findings from the case study conducted by Chi and Nguyen (2017) on Vietnamese learners of English taking academic writing class, in which they reported that the participants were unsure whether changing the text's structure and using synonymous substitutes would preserve the original meaning. This is also one of the challenges faced by the participants in Ismail et al.'s (2020) study, where participants cited "Difficulty in finding out the appropriate synonym to change the word from the original text" as a major challenge. This concern is evident in the following excerpts from the interaction among the participants:

> The most problem [sic] I encountered was looking for synonym words because it's hard to find equivalent words. (Senior High Participant 3)

> Paraphrasing was challenging for several reasons. Firstly, it required a thorough understanding of the original text and its intended meaning and accurately conveying

> the same message as the original but in different words and sentence structures. Finding suitable synonyms and maintaining the same tone as the original text was difficult. (Senior High Participant 5)

> While paraphrasing, I encountered a few challenges such as hesitation if the sentence that I paraphrased does not lose its main idea or point, having second thoughts if I do it correctly since I don't know if I change(d) the words too much or without changing enough…(Senior High Participant 4)

Participants from the college department echo similar challenges, involving a struggle with finding the appropriate synonyms that would preserve the semantic content of the original:

> Finding synonyms without any virtual help or use of paraphrasing apps is hard. Some words cannot capture the meaning of the original word; changing the sentences may alter the original meaning. (College Participant 3)

> Yes, I did experience challenges. There were some words that I couldn't find a synonym to, either because the term I found was too technical that changing it could misconstrue the original idea of the sentence/word or I couldn't think of one off the top of my head. (College Participant 4)

> Yes, paraphrasing is difficult for me as I always depend on online paraphrasing tools. Hard finding (a) suitable words to change the sentence to make it more understandable. It's really hard to paraphrase! (College Participant 5)

> Some words are difficult to paraphrase and some words are not familiar or I'm not familiar with the synonyms. That has always been my struggle, finding synonyms. (College Participant 1)

Meanwhile, participants from the graduate school have their own specific struggle not only with finding synonymous substitutes, but also with being faithful to the original text without committing plagiarism:

> In paraphrasing, I find preserving the tone and meaning of the text challenging as I might alter or completely change what the text meant. I think it's a matter of reading the text repeatedly until it feels right. (PhD Participant 3)

> It is difficult to find substitute words for key terms and phrases such as the components of student success as mentioned above, I figured it is best to retain the words as it is because these are important terms that should not be changed, otherwise the meaning might be compromised; distracting environment filled with noise is challenging for me as I need full concentration when paraphrasing or summarizing articles. (Phd Participant 2)

> The major problem that I encountered has something to do with fidelity. I was not quite sure whether my paraphrased passage was faithful to the original text. Additionally, I was worried that I might give the wrong information. (MA Participant 3)

> Being able to rewrite the whole text including the conscious decision on what information to highlight depending on the sentence construction and appropriate

synonyms of important terms with proper citation and with the goal of preserving the whole point or meaning is quite challenging. Nevertheless I was able to accomplish the activity keeping in mind the things I've learned from the writing courses I have already taken up. The course Academic Writing somehow helped. (MA Participant 1)

B.   Theme 2: Grappling with the Lexico-semantic and Morphosyntactic Demands of Paraphrasing

The second major theme drawn out from the FGD responses pertains to the participants' struggle with the demands of paraphrasing in terms of word choice, vocabulary, and word order. This challenge was, in fact, also pointed out by Ismail et al.'s (2020) participants as "difficulty in understanding unfamiliar words" and "confusion on how to restructure the sentence in a new style." The challenge of a limited vocabulary was also observed by Liao & Tseng (2010) as true to their Chinese participants, a finding confirmed by Milicevic & Tsedryk (2011) and Hirvela & Du (2013), who noted that L2 learners had trouble using lexical resources for paraphrasing. Also resonating with these findings is Cesme's (2022) study involving graduate students pursuing their doctoral studies in ELT at a Turkish university in which he reported that while graduate students produced rather complex paraphrases, they usually copied word strings from the source and substituted synonymous equivalents. The following excerpts from the FGD transcripts provide a glimpse into this specific difficulty:

> For me, miss, it's distinguishing if other parts could be omitted, rearranging the structure of my writing should not stray away from the original text. Connecting the words as a whole sentence while observing proper grammar is another challenge for me. (Senior High Participant 6)

> It was difficult to reduce the length of some sentences and eliminate redundancies, especially since that related information could have been combined. It was difficult organizing my thoughts; making my ideas concise and direct. (Senior High Participant 8)

> For me, there was not much of a challenge. However, I would emphasize on the fact that manually doing so tends to limit the type of words used, especially its depth. Overall, both methods are okay, but it truly comes down to the words we are able to explore and utilize. (College Participant 10)

> Coming up with different terms other than what has already been written is really hard; making the sentences cohesive. If the given text is hard or there are deep English words, I sometimes use an online dictionary and tend to ask my friend to peer check my work if it is right already, 'coz usually, I don't trust my comprehension skill. (College Participant 6)

> How to properly construct the sentence without ruining the content and purpose and constructing an appropriate sentence that would still mean the same as the original are two of my major difficulties in paraphrasing. (College Participant 4)

> It is hard for me to formulate what is really in my mind. I don't know if I am really using the appropriate word I am referring to. I'm not confident with my vocabulary skills. Also, understanding and trying to figure out which words to include. (College

Participant 8)

For graduate school participants, dealing with the lexico-semantic and morphosyntactic demands of paraphrasing is evident in the strategies they applied during the paraphrasing exercise, as they related in the following extracts from the FGD transcript:

> To grasp the content of the text, I first read the text sentence by sentence. Since this is a paraphrasing exercise, I find it strategic to paraphrase the text by sentence, in contrast to writing a summary. I then decided which kind of in-text citation to use (Integrated/Non-Integrated). Lastly, I double-checked the format of the in-text citation to see whether the necessary information was arranged correctly (Surname, year). (PhD Participant 2)

> I read the original passage a number of times. Then, I restated the text using my own words and sentence structure. I tried to find some synonyms and change the word class of some words (noun to verb, verb to noun, noun to adjective). Lastly, I proofread my work to ensure that I did not change the meaning of the original passage. (PhD Participant 1)

> My initial step to paraphrasing the text was to read everything first and restate based on how I understood it. I was also contemplating on whether I should add my own input to the text but I decided not to do that since it might affect the general idea being presented. (PhD Participant 3)

> First, I read each individual sentence twice or thrice to understand it well. Next, I looked for synonyms for some words in the sentence and I tried to change the sentence structure while substituting the synonyms with its corresponding word. (MA Participant 1)

> As much as possible, I would try and change the sentence structure if I could. Next, I would also try to change some words with their synonyms so it doesn't become too similar. (MA Participant 2)

It seems evident from the experiences shared by graduate students that they are utilizing high-level linguistic and cognitive abilities to paraphrase successfully. These strategies were, in fact, suggested in related research literature. For instance, Wette (2010) suggested that students must accurately understand the meaning of the text, which engages their reading skills. The second step , according to Shi (2004), is to select important passages from the source text, alter them, and then accurately incorporate them into their writing. It may be possible to accomplish this transformation by substituting appropriate lexical items for those contained in the original text (Shi, 2004). Bailey (2006) specifically advised using word substitutions, word class changes, word order changes, or a combination of these.

C. Theme 3: Contending with Limited Vocabulary, Poor Comprehension, and Lack of Practice Due to Over-reliance on AI Paraphrasing Tools

Another major challenge identified during the FGD points to three deficiencies experienced by participants across three levels. All participants agree that paraphrasing is a particularly difficult task because of a limited vocabulary range, problems with understanding the original text, and very little opportunity to practice paraphrasing because of overdependence on AI paraphrasing tools. In several studies on paraphrasing in the L2, these three major challenges

are a recurring theme (Barry, 2006; Liao & Tseng, 2010; Milicevic & Tsedryk, 2011; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Khairunnisa et al., 2014; Ismail et al., 2020; Mira & Fatimah, 2020; Cesme, 2022). The following shared experiences bear evidence to this reality:

> I slightly struggled with finding the right term to substitute the old words while considering their appropriateness with the context. Also, I struggled with writing the ideas in my own way whilst making sure I'm not completely altering the idea of the original author (such as by removing or adding more words, meaning, degree, and the like). So, I guess paraphrasing is difficult because it calls for mastery of the English language and a wide vocabulary. (Senior High Participant 7)

> I think many students find paraphrasing very challenging because they did not thoroughly understand the paragraph or the sentence that they want to paraphrase. In paraphrasing, it is important to have a thorough understanding about the topic of the paragraph or sentence that we want to paraphrase so we can write it in our own words. (Senior High Participant 9)

> I think some students have a hard time finding words to express an idea which has already been put into words. It may be because of lack of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension issues. Especially for people who are not so well-read, it is also difficult for them to manipulate the structure of English. Paraphrasing requires good comprehension skills which makes it challenging for most students. (College Participant 9)

> For me, personally, I find it difficult to paraphrase if I am not familiar with the words that are used in the text so it might challenge me a bit to paraphrase it directly without the help of online sources. (College Participant 7)

> I think students find paraphrasing very challenging because it requires practice. Based on experience, a lot of my students find it challenging to paraphrase due to vocabulary problems. Most of the time, they would use inappropriate words or terms in place of the words/terms used in the original text. In addition, a lack of comprehension would hamper them from fully understanding the text. (PhD Participant 3)

> I remember working for almost an hour paraphrasing a certain paragraph. Upon reflecting on this conundrum, I realized that it's not that I did not know how to paraphrase; it's just that I lacked practice. In addition, since paraphrasing lies in the premise of restating the text, I think it may be hard for students to first understand what the text means before they can restate it themselves. They cannot restate the texts using their own words if they do not grasp the text's meaning. (PhD Participant 1)

> Personally, I think many students would find paraphrasing very challenging because they may think or feel that there isn't a better alternative word or way to phrase a certain sentence or paragraph better than the original. This might be because of poor vocabulary skills. I just wish we had more time to engage in paraphrasing practice, because this is really what students lack these days. (MA Participant 1)

CONCLUSION

As pointed out by FGD participants, paraphrasing is a specialized skill that requires a lot of practice to master, as well as a combination of good reading comprehension skills, a wide range of vocabulary and writing proficiency. The task of paraphrasing demands sophisticated linguistic and cognitive abilities from students because paraphrasing is not simply re-wording the original text; paraphrasing requires the ability to manipulate language on multiple levels-- semantically, morphologically, syntactically-- for one to paraphrase successfully.

It is noteworthy that some participants confuse paraphrasing with summarizing, as some of them suggested that they need to be concise when paraphrasing. This implies, as Cesme (2022) pointed out, that in order for students to learn how to paraphrase effectively, they require explicit teaching, sufficient practice, and accurate paraphrase examples.

As revealed through focus group discussions, the answers to the question "What challenges and difficulties do students experience in the process of paraphrasing academic texts without the aid of AI paraphrasing tools?" can be summed up into three major themes: 1) preserving semantic content and fidelity are a major challenge, 2) students are grappling with the lexico-semantic and morphosyntactic demands of paraphrasing, and 3) students are contending with limited vocabulary, poor comprehension and lack of practice due to overdependence on AI paraphrasing tools.

In view of the major findings of the present study, the following recommendations are put forth:

1. Students enrolled in Academic Writing, English for Academic Purpose, and research courses can benefit from guided paraphrase writing exercises that involves giving of inputs on the conventions and mechanics of paraphrasing (Do's and Don'ts) and critiquing of paraphrased texts to distinguish between good and bad paraphrases. Students can expand their vocabulary and improve their comprehension skills by making reading academic texts a habit. This practice will also expose them to the technical vocabulary and register of their discipline.

2. Research and Academic English instructors can make use of relevant, research-based information to address paraphrasing errors and detect plagiarism in their students' written outputs. Teachers can provide more opportunities for paraphrasing drills and take time to discuss the features of a well-paraphrased text. Vocabulary building exercises can also be considered as an enrichment lesson.

3. Module planners and designers can examine the existing syllabus and learning modules and include topics such as Features of a Good Paraphrase, Do's and Don'ts in Paraphrasing, Restating an Idea in Different Ways, and How to Avoid Plagiarism, Summarizing, and Quoting Texts. It would be to the utmost benefit of the learners to introduce these concepts as early as Grade 11 in Senior High School though the subject English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) and in First Year in college through the General Education course, Purposive Communication.

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APPENDICES:

1.   <u>Sample Paraphrase Practice Texts</u>

Excerpt A: Although parents condemn lying and emphasize the importance of honesty, many parents lie to their own children (Heyman et al., 2009). In addition, many children tell different types of lies more often than parents like to believe. Learning to lie successfully is a natural part of growing up and human developmental trajectory. There are many types of lies and purpose for lying for oneself or for others: white lies, lying to protect someone's feelings, avoiding punishment, and more. Lying is common in interpersonal communications. As children grow

older, children understand more about prosocial lie-telling. However, lying can become a problem and has negative consequences if chronically or inappropriately used. In order to successfully deceive another, the lie-teller needs to regulate verbal statements and nonverbal behavior. Verbal statements refers to the content of the statements made during the process of telling a lie, whereas nonverbal behavior refers to facial expressions, vocal, and body language (Talwar & Lee, 2002).

Source: Heyman GD, Sweet MA, Lee K. (2009) Children's reasoning about lie-telling and truth-telling in politeness contexts. Social Development.18(3):728–746.

Excerpt B: Organic fertilizers can be produced from a number of sources such as crop residues, manure and municipal waste, among others. Other sources of organic fertilizer such as sewage sludge, slaughterhouse waste and municipal solid waste may also be processed into organic fertilizer. Organic farming improves soil quality, secures the future of the farm and offers environmental protection. The author added that more soil nutrients result in less soil erosion and an increase in soil biodiversity. In addition, there is an increase in soil fertility in organic farming with minimum tillage, organic fertilizers, proper crop rotation and cover crops, green manure, etc. The key indicator for assessing soil quality is organic matter content as it directly affects soil physical properties. Organic manure also provides essential micronutrients such as S, Mg, and Cu, Mn and Fe, etc.

Source: Khan, M.N. et al. (2018). Contaminants in Organic Fertilizers. Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/organic-fertilizer. Retrieved 20 February 2023.

Excerpt C: Students choose to buy the product which will meet their interest relative to product and price. A study by Bona (2018) concluded that college students' spending behavior is massively influenced by their family background. Parents also play a critical role in shaping not only the attitudes towards financial management but also the life attitudes in general of their children. To improve financial habits, students must take some time to create concrete measures to help them keep track of their expenses. First, they should create their own budget and keep ways on how to improve it. Keeping a record of expenses will help them monitor how much money they spend on clothing, entertainment, and gadgets. They should not forget to allocate money for savings because a good budget does have savings. Lastly, they should keep a positive attitude. This study failed to quantify student spending behavior in terms of monetary terms, since it was more qualitative in nature.

Source: Singh, S. et al. (2020). Student Budgeting and Spending Behavior. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts,* Vol. 8, Issue No. 7, ISSN 2320-2882.

2.   Focus Group Discussion Guide

FGD Batch Code Number:
Grade Level:
Date:

Part I: Rapport Building

✧   How are you today? What keeps you busy?
✧   How did you find our paraphrasing exercise? Did you have fun?

Part II: FGD Session

1.   How did you go about the paraphrasing exercise? Did you follow some steps?
2.   Did you encounter some stumbling blocks or difficulties while paraphrasing? If yes, can you tell me what the particular difficulties are?
3.   Which part of the original text was particularly challenging to paraphrase? Why do you think that section was difficult to paraphrase?
4.   To you, personally, why is the task of paraphrasing particularly challenging or difficult?
5.   What skills do you think a student like you possess in order to paraphrase effectively?

Part III: Wrap-up

✢   What did you learn from the paraphrasing practice exercise?