

Surveying Paraphrasing Instructions on Universities Writing Center Websites

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Abstract:

Accidental plagiarism may result when a novice writer cannot construct an eligible paraphrase. Early from the beginning of this century, some scholars argue that composition professionals at the college level should not teach paraphrase construction during composition classes. Since university Writing Centers have taken up a more active role on college campuses, a question arises about what role university Writing Centers have taken in providing instructions or other types of assistance in paraphrasing construction to novice writers. The current study is a survey of existing asynchronous instructional materials on paraphrasing offered by research-intensive universities for their potential clients. Writing Centers in 114 Research-1 universities in the U.S. were investigated. To find out what are some patterns and trends in terms of the ways in which paraphrasing instructional materials have been presented on some university Writing Center websites, content analysis was used. The results of this study provide possible insights on whether there is consensus across different institutions on a standard set of criteria about an acceptable or appropriate paraphrase, which remains a key question in the paraphrasing literature or the college composition literature.

Keywords:

Paraphrasing, University Writing Centers, Websites, Consensus

1. Introduction

College writing is a cohesive conversation among writers and between a writer and a reader, and thus is a community activity. Novice writers enter this conversation by acknowledging other people's work in the academic writing discourse community. To maintain their membership in the community, they incorporate more experienced writers' work to inform or enhance their own writing [1]. For novice writers seeking entrance into the discourse community, source use skills are not always easy to acquire [2]. Thus, it is possible for them to commit unintentional plagiarism due to inappropriate use of sources [3,4,5,6].

Unintentional plagiarism, also known as inadvertent plagiarism [5], unintentional plagiarism [7], and inappropriate textual borrowing [8], is closely related to the construction of a weak or ineligible paraphrase [6]. Some scholars define

paraphrasing as a skill [2, 8, 9] that writers need when they incorporate other people's work that paves the foundation for their own composition [9]. It has also been referred to as a strategy [9] that writers use to connect what they understand from their reading and what they reproduce in their own writing. Additionally, paraphrasing is a tool [10]. If writers use this tool well, they can achieve linguistic [11], rhetorical [2], and communicative goals through writing. Noteworthy is that, if a paraphrase is not constructed carefully, writers might risk committing plagiarism without the intention or awareness of doing so.

Constructing a paraphrase, however, is a "cognitively demanding" task for many students who are new to the academic writing discourse community [2,6,10,12]. Many of them do not have the confidence to write as well as the source text, e.g., [10,13,14,15]. For example, one participant, Zhang (pseudonym) in Hyland's [13] study was intimidated by the gap in writing between expectations perceived by himself and his own writing ability. Therefore, he did not attempt to use paraphrasing; instead, he decided to use a paper written by another person as if it was his own work. A participant in Leki and Carson's [16] study commented that the source text conveyed the meanings in the best way and using one's own words to paraphrase would make it "worse" (p. 59). Therefore, facing similar situations, the paraphrasing task is even more difficult for many multilingual students if their English language proficiency level is still low when they first enter the English-speaking country education system [1,8,9]. For some ESL writers who have low English reading and writing proficiency, they might have linguistic barriers, for example reading proficiency that would influence how well they comprehend texts [5,15,16,17] prior to their facing and tackling other types of difficulty, which include being not familiar with such documentation conventions as APA or MLA styles (e.g., [18,19]), and incorporating ideas from other people's writing into their own writing in a cohesive and integrative manner [16].

Thus, one effective solution is to support students with adequate instructions in writing appropriate paraphrases [6,12,20,21]. However, resources are needed to support novice writers, especially those who first enter the academic writing discourse community, such as domestic freshmen and nonnative international students. On college campuses, various types of resources can be easily accessed by students when they need help with constructing their own paraphrases. For example, composition courses or second language writing courses [10] and university writing centers [17].

Writing Centers at universities in the U.S. are "typically centrally located" [22]. As university Writing Centers take up a more and more active and important role on university campuses [22], professionals in writing studies have been affirmed by day-to-day practice that assistance in paraphrasing construction from the Writing Centers is feasible and in fact calls for more examination so as to better assist writers in need [23,24]. As the quantity of paraphrasing instructions is on the rise, which Yamada's [12] study suggests, a relatively comprehensive survey of what resources are available on the web for novice writers in different higher education institutions seems to be a task in need at this time.

As early as the year of 2006, Howard and Carrick's book chapter, has advocated a role for Writing Center directors [25]. They proposed that Writing Center directors could take up the role of promoting appropriate ways to ethical "text multiplicity". Their advocacy was timely and reasonable. The beginning of the twenty-first century witnessed the rapid growth of online resources resulted from the unprecedented

prosperity of information technology. In their recommended practices, they mentioned that it is very probable that faculty members in the university community would pick up paper materials from the Center or download online resources from Writing Center of their own institution or from the website of another university Writing Center, and make use of them by presenting those materials to students in their courses.

The most recent work by Wood, Roggenbuck, Doerschler, and Hicks [26] documented the effects and outcomes of a series of workshop focusing on patchwriting in their own institution. Their study serves as a pioneering investigation into workshops focusing on text use strategies by the University Writing Center. The contents of the workshop offered by them are highly related to paraphrasing construction. The pandemic period starting from December 2019 and the next three years, during which the WHO declared COVID-19 a global public health crisis, witnessed a more urgent need in using Writing Center asynchronous online resources for writing instruction.

So far, little is known about how the Writing Centers provide asynchronous assistance to novice writers regarding the construction of paraphrases. In the meantime, examining how university Writing Centers present paraphrasing instructions can inform materials developers of the room for improvement regarding paraphrasing instructions by university writing centers' online platforms if they utilize that asynchronous component [27].

The current study investigated websites of Writing Centers that serve universities with frequent and high-quality research activities in the U.S.. To find out the state-of-the-art of this important set of available paraphrasing instruction materials, patterns were identified and discussed based on comparison and contrast across the universities. Findings from this exploratory study could provide insights into the development of paraphrasing materials and instructions, since various aspects of the key notion of paraphrasing remain in need of consensus by different stake-holders, namely instructors or professors and students in higher education settings [10].

1.1. Using Paraphrasing to Enter an Academic Discourse Community

Academic research writing is a community activity. Writing about research in fact resembles a conversation in the academic discourse community. A researcher needs to know what other researchers have done in order to spot a gap in the literature and establish their own arguments. Talking about other people's research fairly and communicating a researcher's own argument clearly so as to keep the academic writing discourse going are essential research writing skills [19]. These skills are often characterized by composition scholars as intertextuality skills [11]. Hirvela and Du's [10] research, for example, presented two case studies in which the participants recognized the connections between intertextuality skills and the process of socializing themselves as a member into the academic writing discourse in their specific fields of study. Paraphrasing is a vital intertextuality skill for these research writers [11]. More emphasis on the importance of mastering paraphrasing skills is needed since its acquisition takes a lot of practice on the part of writers [17], including writers whose first language is either English [3] or another language [11,28,29]. For novice English writers whose first language is not English, to write strong paraphrases in their English composition, they would probably face challenges both at the comprehension end and at the production end. In the acquisition and actual

construction processes, novice writers would need assistance from different resources provided by the universities.

Resources may include hands-on practice offered by different academic units or campus services. Despite the existence of various resources with paraphrasing instructions, there are various approaches with different conservation in giving instructions or guidelines on constructing paraphrases. For example, in classroom practice, when instructions on paraphrasing are given in a formal lesson, the time instructors can devote to presenting paraphrasing and facilitating students' practice in constructing paraphrases is very limited. In contrast, from the curriculum perspective, foundational and introductory courses (e.g., first-year composition courses or their equivalents) typically prioritize instructions on other more global topics, instead of local or micro-level concerns as how to construct an eligible paraphrase. Guidebooks in the Writing Center field, for example, the guidebook by Ianetta and Fitzgerald [30], encourage consultants to prioritize global issues before tackling sentence-level issues, which are closely related to micro-level concerns. Furthermore, it is not an easy task to give instructions on how to paraphrase. In his dissertation, Michiels mentioned that there are as many as one hundred transformational steps when paraphrasing [31]. Despite the difficulty to teach paraphrasing, Yamada's [12] study shows us that as early as the beginning of the twenty-first century, some university writing centers have started presenting instructional materials for paraphrasing construction on their websites. Some university writing centers have online extensions, which are online asynchronous writing labs like Purdue OWL, but they are not as well-developed or comprehensive or reputable as Purdue OWL. Despite being less developed and less frequently visited by users outside their own institutions, the format of these online asynchronous writing webpage resources resembles Purdue OWL.

While there may be various resources on college campuses to support paraphrasing instructions, few provide ongoing support for students throughout their academic career. Sometimes, the focus is a one-time occurrence, with the assumption that students will be able to write appropriate paraphrases once they learn about some techniques for constructing paraphrases. At other times, paraphrasing instructions are embedded into instructions for a bigger focus, for example the general topic of source use strategies or summary writing [9]. That is, how to construct a paraphrase is not emphasized enough. In addition to face-to-face instruction which seems insufficient, students can get asynchronous help with paraphrasing construction. One example is the use of the Purdue Online Writing Lab Mail. The Purdue Online Writing Lab Mail, one form of asynchronous online tutoring by the renowned Purdue OWL [22], occasionally receives and responds to questions related to paraphrasing [32]. Due to the more product-oriented nature of the OWL Mail services, questions related to paraphrasing, which tend to be more relevant to processes, do not take up a large portion, and was "asked by users only less than 5% of the time" [32]. Specifically, for paraphrasing, the percentage is "0.08%" [32]. Therefore, more assistance and emphasis on paraphrasing skill acquisition is still in need.

1.2. The Role of Writing Center Websites as a Source for Paraphrasing Assistance

Ever since the inception of their development, Writing Centers and composition classrooms have a special relationship, with it being alternative instead of supplementary [33,34]. Thus, University Writing Centers have been portrayed as the "point-of-need pedagogical scene" [35]. Quite a sizable group of scholars advocate that we should promote the role of university Writing Centers when it comes to

helping writers to master source use skills (e.g., [17,25]), including how to construct a paraphrase (e.g., [30]). As the major inspiration for the current study, Yamada [12] looked into six writing center websites instructions and some other higher education institutions' guidance documents on how to avoid plagiarism. One of the common themes that Yamada found is that Writing Center websites present paraphrasing as one effective way to avoid plagiarism [12]. Despite the fact that the angle of Yamada's [12] paper was avoiding plagiarism, her article has devoted much space to the discussion of paraphrasing techniques presented on the websites. The current study expands on the scope of Yamada's work by investigating a larger sample of university Writing Centers and delves deeper into the topic of paraphrasing in order to investigate the topic from a contemporary perspective.

All the instructional materials analyzed in this study are from websites of university writing centers. Researchers consider Writing Center websites as a trustworthy data source, mainly relying on two key features of such type of open-access resource. First and foremost, Writing Center websites are the "public face" of a Writing Center [22]. This feature seems to add to the reliability of the data that researchers and scholars collected from university Writing Center websites. Another important feature worth noticing is that Writing Center websites can be a very informative tool, and previous research has utilized these websites to acquire data on the state-of-the-art of different aspects related to the writing centers, for example, the comparison between users and non-users of university Writing Centers [36], the various administrative dimensions [22], instructions on avoiding plagiarism [12], and so on. Isaacs and Knight [22], for example, chose one hundred and one top schools or colleges in the U.S. and investigated publicly available online information from the Writing Centers of those universities with the purpose of looking at the administrative dimensions of those Writing Centers. The current study also examined a comprehensive set of university Writing Centers' websites and specifically looked into paraphrasing instructions thereof. Content analysis [37] was used to explore the meaningful patterns of different types of paraphrasing instructional materials on the Writing Center websites, similar to methods used in Isaacs and Knight [22].

Resources or instructions publicized on the Writing Center websites, like those instructional excerpts cited in Yamada [12], could be of timely and constant help attributable to their "24/7 availability" [22], also as Hewett terms it "a potential 24/7 educational opportunity" [38], and immediacy [22]. Now could be the right time to give a comprehensive review on paraphrasing instructions on the Writing Center websites because it will have been more than one and a half decades since the last time we surveyed what resources were available (see [12]). The examination of paraphrasing instructions on Writing Center websites not only can keep Writing Centers informed of what are ready for their clients to use so as to guide the practice in the Writing Center field and advance the Writing Center scholarship in paraphrasing instructions, but also can promote the development of paraphrasing literature in the field of Writing Studies. In 2003, Yamada pointed out that the concept of an acceptable paraphrase was still vague or ambiguous. By then, neither consensus on the concept of paraphrasing nor a solid set of criteria for appropriate paraphrases was reached.

1.3. Motivation for the Present Study

To inform pedagogical practice and to find out how different academic writing stakeholders perceive paraphrasing, researchers in Writing studies examined how

students compose paraphrases in their writing [9, 10]. They also looked at how professionals or instructors perceived students' paraphrasing products [13]. Through the medium of teachers' feedback on students' paraphrases in writing, and by looking through the lens of the teacher's perception and the focal students' perception, mismatch of understanding on the feedback was revealed in Hyland's work [13]. One participant in her study, namely Maho (a pseudonym) considered paraphrased sentences with copied chunks but without either quotation marks or acknowledgement as ethical practice [13]. Therefore, we can note that educators and students perceive the nature of paraphrasing products differently [8,13]. In the meantime, some students are not clear about what characterises an eligible paraphrase ([4], as cited in [5], p. 974). Michiel's [31] dissertation has looked into the resources of references books regarding paraphrasing instructions. Tomas [27] found out that writing instructors seem to prefer materials on the Internet than those from the References books. The current study looked into one type of Internet sources, namely Writing Center websites, for paraphrasing instructions.

After all this investigation, we can see that discrepancy exists among different groups regarding the conceptualization of paraphrasing based on existing literature [8]. Through the current study, one purpose was to find out if materials by the university writing centers could show us some patterns regarding how they conceptualize and contextualize paraphrasing. A second purpose was to examine whether scholars have reached agreement on what an eligible or acceptable paraphrase should look like, after one and a half decades passed. The expectation was that collective data regarding paraphrasing instructions from Writing Center websites could hint at the state-of-the-art of the second goal.

Thus, the current study attempted an evidence-supported answer to the question about how Writing Centers at R-1 universities present paraphrasing instructions on their websites. Echoing Isaacs and Knight's [22] claim, if we find a verified answer to this question, universities Writing Programs would be in a better position to make decisions. Meanwhile, results of the current study will assist Writing Centers in making more informed decisions about how to offer paraphrasing instructions to potential clients.

2. Materials and Methods

The current study followed the principles for RAD research, portrayed by Driscoll and Perdue as an approach necessitated by the goal of "speak[ing] a common research language" among the research community[39]. "RAD" stands for "replicable, aggregable, and data-supported" [40]. The current study also falls into the category of document analysis [41].

2.1. Defining the Scope of Paraphrasing in the Current Study

The concept of "paraphrasing" could have meanings of a broad range. The concept of paraphrasing is slightly different than the meaning of the word when it is used by Valentine in her study focusing on the construct of listening in the Writing Center context [42]. In the current study, paraphrase refers to putting other people's written ideas into one's own writing in his or her own words, whereas the paraphrasing that appears a few times in Valentine's paper mainly refers to orally conveying what other people have said in one's own words.

2.2. Selection of University Writing Centers

Similar to Isaacs and Knight [22], the current study sought out a comprehensive list of Writing Center websites to frame the investigation. Because research universities are known for producing products that engrain researchers into academic discourse communities, resources for avoiding plagiarism instruction, with paraphrasing included, in these contexts is highly important. Therefore, the current study used Carnegie Mellon University's 2018 list of Research One (hereafter, "R-1") universities to sample Writing Centers. A focus on R-1 institutions can be justified by the fact that students in this university context need paraphrasing skills given their research expectations; furthermore, faculty members of these universities would probably need to help their students with paraphrasing strategies when helping them to improve their research papers; moreover, faculty members in these universities are more likely to refer their students to the university Writing Center with help in paraphrasing other researchers' ideas. R-1 universities have been identified based on whether the doctoral programs in the universities fulfilled certain criteria and then the universities have been labeled as having different levels of research impact. The 2018 R-1 list contains 131 universities in the U.S., either public or private.

Starting with this list, the university's homepage was first collected. In each homepage's search engine, keywords were entered in order to discover the Writing Center, or its equivalent. Some university Writing Centers do not have the keyword "center" in their names [22], so a range of other search phrases were used, such as "Writing Center", "Writing Lab", "Writing Place", "Tutorial Center", and so on.

The search result was that not all the universities in the R-1 list have a Writing Center website. Of the 131 universities, 114 had a Writing Center website.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

From the 114 Writing Centers, each website was examined to determine whether they included resources related to paraphrasing. Of the 114 Writing Centers, 52 (45.61%) have content related to paraphrasing and 62 (54.39%) do not. To determine the categories of paraphrasing instructional materials, an inductive coding process [37] was used. A set of paraphrasing categories was then constructed: definitions of paraphrasing, examples of good/bad paraphrases, steps to constructing a paraphrase, links to external resources/sites (e.g., workshop announcements, and websites of other Writing Centers). Once these categories were determined, a thorough analysis of paraphrasing instructions in all 52 websites was conducted.

Since Writing Center websites demonstrate drastically different structure and design ([22] p. 37), content from the 52 sites were analyzed through content analysis (also utilized in [22]) to get the fullest meaning of each type of data and achieve the research purposes of the current study. For definitions, content was first broken down by idea units and then themes were generated based on what features were included in all the idea units. For "examples of good/bad paraphrases", the presence of good examples and/or bad examples was recorded and also whether comments were provided to explain why they were identified as good or bad examples. For steps, all the steps in each sequence provided by the university Writing Centers were classified into three stages based on how students approach writing in one's own words, namely: the stage before "writing in one's own words", the stage of "writing in one's words", and the stage after "writing in one's own words". For links to external sites, the external websites were recorded.

Data interpretation and discussion combined the results from the separate analysis on each of the four formats of data. To sum up, the aim of this study was threefold: (a) to investigate whether the online resources presented by university Writing Centers reach an agreement regarding the construct of paraphrasing, including a definition; (b) to depict how the emphasis that writing center websites put into various aspects of paraphrasing constructions differs; (c) to examine whether the materials presented portray paraphrasing skills similarly or differently regarding its involvement in reading and writing processes and in linguistic and rhetorical aspects.

3. Results and Discussion

After careful analysis, noteworthy findings will be presented from a few perspectives that would contribute to the discussion on paraphrasing instructions, namely defining paraphrasing, exemplifying paraphrasing, and constructing paraphrases.

3.1. Definitions of paraphrasing: Consensus and controversy

In the literature, there has not been an agreed-upon definition for “paraphrasing” [10,12]. It seems that, fifteen years later since Yamada’s work, scholars and practitioners in the Writing studies field have not yet fully disambiguated the concept of paraphrasing, based on the materials presented on the Writing Center websites.

Twenty-three out of the 52 (114 websites in total) provide a definition, or at least a working definition, of paraphrasing. Table 1 shows the nine themes and some idea units that exemplify these themes.

Table 1. Description of thematic categories representing definitions of paraphrasing from R-1 university Writing Centers (N = 23).

Theme	Number and Percent of Writing Centers	Example Idea Units
restate in one’s own words	22 (95.65%)	To paraphrase <u>is</u> to put the ideas in a passage into our own words (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) A paraphrase accurately <u>states</u> all the relevant information from a passage in your own words and phrasing (Northwestern University)
major ideas	9 (39.13%)	“expresses its original meaning” (The University of Texas at Dallas) “you are explaining your source’s argument, following its line of reasoning” (University of Kansas)
order of presentation	8 (34.78%)	“usually following the order in which the ideas were presented in the original” (MIT) “paraphrase, which is a rephrasing in your own ... and sentence structure” (University of Michigan)
length	4 (17.39%)	“Usually a paraphrase is a bit shorter than the original” (MIT) “using about the same number of words” (North Carolina State University at Raleigh)
Citation style	4 (17.39%)	“Any paraphrase requires the same kind of citation as an exact quotation.” (MIT)
Comparison with summary	3 (13.04%)	“A paraphrase is more detailed than a summary” (Ohio State University) “A more detailed restatement than a summary” (Purdue University)

Terms and concepts	1 (4.35%)	“but when terms or concepts have to be defined, (MIT), a paraphrase might actually be longer” (MIT)
Being not evaluative	1 (4.35%)	“without any additional comments or elaborations” (Northwestern University)
Purpose of paraphrasing	1 (4.35%)	“to enhance your own work” (The University of Texas at Austin)

Among the 23 definitions cited from the Writing Center webpages of the R-1 universities, 22 contain an element of “restate in one’s own words”. It is safe to say that this feature is the major difference between quotations and paraphrases, which echoes Michiel’s [31] finding in his dissertation. However, sentences resulting from either paraphrasing or summarizing need to be in “one’s own words”. Other features following could help to distinguish paraphrases with summaries in much more detail.

Nine definitions have the idea unit of “major ideas”. They all emphasize the importance of retaining or being truthful to the meanings of the original text or source text. Eight mentioned the order of presentation of information or ideas in the new sentence. However, four of them state that the new or rewritten sentence should maintain the same order of presentation of information, which is the sequence of information presented, as in the original text, whereas the other four say that the order of presentation of information should be different than that of the original text. Therefore, discrepancy exists from this sample in this theme regarding order of presentation for information. In the guidebook by Bruce and Rafoth [43], Bouman emphasizes that syntactic changes are necessary when composing a paraphrase (p. 166). Specifically, he put it this way (emphasis by the author of the current paper): “Doing a word-for-word substitution in an attempt to paraphrase a source, but **keeping** its basic ideas and **sentence structure intact**; ‘patchwriting,’ or building a paper by patching together sections of text from one or more sources” (p. 162). Therefore, according to the Handbook, adopting the same sentence structures from the original text could result in plagiarism.

This from one perspective confirms that there has not been a commonly agreed-on definition for “paraphrase” [31], and different institutions come up with their own working definitions for the concept of a “paraphrase”. Despite the commonality in some of the characteristics, each concept emphasizes different characteristics or aspects of paraphrases to various extents. This phenomenon leads to the conclusion that a more standardized working definition for paraphrasing is still in need.

4.2. Examples of paraphrases

Tomas [27] surveyed writing instructors’ preferences on whether examples are needed and what types of examples they hope to see in instructional materials that aim at helping to avoid plagiarism (p. 234). Based on survey responses from 113 writing instructors, Tomas [27] found that “24 (21%)” of them hoped to see examples demonstrating poor source use strategies, and “21 (17%)” among the rest wanted to include good examples of textual borrowing (p. 234). Furthermore, another nine instructors wished to see both good and bad examples (p. 234). The examples in the current study, in spite of the source texts’ coming from different disciplines or fields of studies, can illustrate how to construct an eligible paraphrase or can demonstrate some unacceptable constructing strategies so as to warn novice writers of avoiding adopting those. If the examples are accompanied with comments or explanations, examples and the explanations can supplement each other or add to the explication of one another. Twenty-one universities have examples accompanied by explanations.

Twenty-eight of 114 (24.56%) Writing Centers websites provide examples of paraphrasing. Most of them (N=27), except Temple University, provided the source text prior to the examples paraphrases. That is, material users cannot find the source texts for the paraphrasing examples in the materials provided by Temple University. In the meantime, one special feature of the Temple University Writing Center webpage is that it is the only university Writing Center website that has a set of contextualized exercises following the instructions. Moreover, it only provides good examples.

Table 2. Numbers of Universities that provide different types of examples.

Types of examples	Numbers (N=28)
Writing Centers that only provide good examples	8 (28.57%)
Writing Centers that only provide bad examples	1 (3.57%)
Writing Centers that provide both good and bad examples	19 (67.86%)

From the above table, the university writing centers in R-1 universities seem to have reached a good balance in presenting plagiarized paraphrases and legitimate ones. Therefore, university Writing Center websites in the current study do not place “overemphasis on unacceptable paraphrases” ([12], p. 251).

After examining all the examples on different kinds of paraphrases, we found that many universities accompany examples together with comments or immediate feedback/explanations on them. A smaller number of universities provide guidelines or strategies prior to the examples, even if they do not follow up the examples with comments or analysis. One specific instance is the examples by Carnegie Mellon University. The handout by Carnegie Mellon University shows us how to construct a strong paraphrase step by step. One example with explanation illustrates one step. The sequences of steps show us the thinking process when composing a paraphrase. Yamada [12] pointed out that most of the examples on the institutional websites seemed very different from the selected passage from the original source due to the lack of demonstration of the thinking processes. The instructional materials on the website by Carnegie Mellon University have shown some progress on the part of the university through giving step-by-step demonstration alongside explanation.

4.2.1. Explanations and Comments on the Examples: linguistic aspects and rhetorical aspects

In Table 3, comments on the good examples (altogether from seven universities but with eighteen tokens of comments) have been categorized into a few types of themes based on the different aspects of a paraphrase that they focus on.

Table 3. Themes into which comments on good examples can be categorized (Emphasis by author of the present study).

	Themes for comments on good examples	# of tokens	Themes for comments on bad examples	# of tokens
1)	give attribution to the original text	11	lack attribution	9
2)	Change wording from the original text	10	keep wording from the original text	11
3)	changed sentence structure	8	keep the same sentence structure	9
4)	quote when using exact	3	no distinction between	6

	words from the source text		parts that were directly quoted or the writer's own words despite the fact that exactly copied expressions exist in the newly written text	
5)	retain meaning of the original text	6	are too lengthy	a) 1 b) 1
6)	fulfill rhetorical functions	7	In what aspects do they still <i>do well?</i>	5
7)	a) other notes. b) one in-text citation and one corresponding entry in the References List; c) Keep those words that are common expressions in daily life and are irreplaceable;	a) 7 b) 1 c) 1	a) other notes b) compare to summary	a) 7 b) 1

The first five themes on bad examples all pointed out what aspects of a paraphrase is inappropriate. In the list of comments for bad examples, theme in the sixth row throws light upon some good aspects of those weak or plagiarized examples, in spite of their overall weak or plagiarized nature. Comprehensive explanations were given to even poor examples. That is, poor examples have some aspects which could be worth learning by novice writers. This seems to hint to the website users that if a writer wants to compose a strong and eligible paraphrase, he or she should take heed of every aspect of a paraphrase to make it so.

Both comments on the examples and “steps” data show materials users how the example paraphrases were constructed. In Yamada’s article [12], one of her arguments was that the example paraphrases were so drastically different than the source texts that a reader might not know that it is a paraphrase or could not match a paraphrase with its original text. With the help of immediate explanation and further with explicit and transferable steps or procedures about how the paraphrase was constructed, a website user could easily find out how the good or poor examples were composed.

Yamada [12] and Michiels [31] both remind us that paraphrasing instructions should emphasize the integration of paraphrases into the bigger picture or the whole essay that a writer produces, so that paraphrases could appropriately fulfill their rhetorical functions. Some comments are on rhetorical functions of the paraphrases. To write an eligible and strong paraphrase, one needs to take into consideration the intended rhetorical function of it. Specifically, two universities proposed to writers the caveat of keeping the portion small when incorporating ideas from a source text despite that they are paraphrasing the original text. The two universities are the University of Utah and the University of Delaware. Comments on the example paraphrases by Yale University also caution us when we need to paraphrase a passage, we should be selective and only paraphrase the excerpt which is highly related to the main topic in our own essays. Moreover, one of the steps emphasizes taking into consideration the rhetorical aspects of the newly generated text. They mentioned such key words as “tones” or “voices”. Yale University is the only university that mentions the appropriate use of paraphrase can help your readers to distinguish your “voice” and the “voice” of the author of the source text.

Some steps emphasize that writers go back to the bigger picture from their drafts of paraphrases. For example, one step after a writer has a first draft of a paraphrase, namely this one: “5. Following paraphrase with discussion (2 tokens)”. Two universities, Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Louisville, have the step of “following paraphrasing with discussion” as one of the steps after a writer has a draft of a paraphrase. This step brings the writer back to the bigger context of their writing, and this step also serves as a step for the paraphrase to fulfil its ultimate rhetorical function.

4.2.2. Comments on Examples: paraphrasing versus patchwriting

Five of the universities Writing Center websites mentioned “patchwriting” when they gave examples of paraphrases. Explanation contains three reasons why the patch-written text was considered a plagiarized text: 1) kept the same sentence structure as the original text; 2) used some of the same wording as those in the original text; 3) used one’s own words and the words by the author of the original text in the paraphrase; the copied words from the source text should be placed in quotation marks. The good aspect about the paraphrase is that it gives credit to the original author.

Take as an example the handout by the University of Nevada Las Vegas. What is worth our attention is that the handout by this university gave us a working definition of “patchwriting”. It is like this: “If you just change some words using a thesaurus but keep the original sentence structure, it is ‘patchwriting’, which is a form of plagiarism.” This working definition echoes the description of plagiarism by Bruce and Rafoth ([43], p. 162) in the guidebook, which has been quoted in the discussion for definitions in this paper. Some writing studies researchers might disagree with this (e.g., [3]). Further discussion is in the next paragraph. Scholars agree that paraphrasing is an essential way to protect oneself from unintentional plagiarism and furthermore, patchwriting could be a necessary developmental step on the acquisition path along which a writer advances [3, 17].

After examining the explanation by these five universities Writing Center websites, we have a clearer idea about how these university Writing Centers perceive the relationship between “patchwriting” and “paraphrasing”. For most of the Writing Centers, they treat “patchwriting” as being risky and they seem to agree that patchwriting would be recognized as one type of plagiarism. None of them treats patchwriting as a necessary step or a type of strategy for novice writers who are learning to compose paraphrases or who are new to the academic writing discourse community, as Howard [3] has proposed. In the meantime, this could be a reasonable phenomenon due to the popular assumption that resources on the Writing Center websites could be a “quick help” type resource. If the discussion of patchwriting being a type of novice writers’ strategy by writing studies scholars is displayed, the space for it on the Writing Center website would be far from enough.

4.3. Steps of paraphrasing

Based on the results of Tomas’ [27] study, writing instructors also hope to see the steps of rephrasing a text demonstrated in a highly explicit manner (p. 236). Eighteen (out of 52) university Writing Centers websites have content that provide step-by-step description about how to construct appropriate paraphrases. All these steps, despite that they are described in various ways, they to a very large extent present the complexity of paraphrasing constructions.

From the steps data belonging to the three different stages, we can easily spot an overarching principle among them despite the variability in description of the steps, which is that it is important to create distance or barrier between the source text and a paraphrase by the means of space, for example by setting the original text aside, or time, for example by taking a short break before going back to the writing task.

Deeper analysis on steps data in fact pointed to two key dichotomy scholars usually found in the construct of paraphrasing. One is the dichotomy between reading skills and writing skills, and the other dichotomy is between rhetorical features and linguistic features of paraphrasing, despite that the two aspects are not as explicit as they have been shown in the examples data of paraphrases.

4.3.1. Paraphrasing: a process integratively combining recursive reading and writing

Ianetta and Fitzgerald [30] reached a conclusion that “Recursiveness, then, is a highly idiosyncratic repetition of various activities in order to move forward with the writing” (p. 87). Recursiveness characterises the reading and writing processes involved in constructing paraphrases. Different types of reading are mentioned in the steps by different university Writing Centers. Ellen Carillo [44] mentions that reading is a very important part for the Writing Center scholarship. Despite the fact that reading is still an underexplored topic in the Writing Center literature through empirical research, the reading process does play a big role in the practical work in the Writing Center, which could easily find ground from the frequent mentioning of the various types of reading from the data in the current study.

Some codes centering reading appear in all three different stages. During the paraphrasing construction process, a writer always goes back and forth between the process of reading and writing. That is, reading and writing are recursive processes when one composes a paraphrase.

Types of reading. Types of reading discussed in the handout book for tutors by Ianetta and Fitzgerald [30] are evidential in the steps data. For the step of “read”, there are a few types of reading that are key to the paraphrasing construction process and are evident in the sequences proposed on the Writing Center websites. The different types are possible examples from different stages of constructing a paraphrase, and each of them has a different purpose or function. To “read” the entire article, is one among the various types, with the purpose that the writer understands the context of the source passage (roughly a few sentences) which he or she is going to base the new text on. This type utilizes the “top-down” characteristic of reading process. Another type is to “read” the specific parts in the original text, after a writer decides on which part he or she is going to use as the source text of a paraphrase. This type resembles what one does in a close reading process.

Reading process is also needed after one completes a draft of a paraphrase. Thirteen of the sequences for steps mentioned that a writer should “check against the original text to find out about the accuracy of the paraphrase”. This step requires that a writer do a specific type of reading after having a draft. This type of reading is purposeful, and aims to find out whether the newly rewritten text succeeds in retaining the meanings or ideas from the original text or not. When composing paraphrases, a writer should make sure the new text retains the ideas in the original text in a correct way, and make sure the new text does not distort the meaning of the original text.

The code “comparing the rewritten texts against the original” belongs to the process of “reading”. It is a re-reading process. It is a purposeful reading comprehension process. The purpose is mainly to make sure the new text retains the original ideas in the source text in a correct way, and in the meantime it does not distort the meaning of the original text.

Last but not least, one more type of “reading” makes the most of the metacognitive aspect of the reading process. Some steps centering reading are intended for protecting a writer from accusations of plagiarism. Take as an example the last two steps by Colorado State University. The last but one step in the sequence by Colorado State University reads like this: “After editing and revising, compare your paraphrase with the original passage. Do your words accurately convey the original contents? Are they sufficiently different to avoid a charge of plagiarism?” And the last step of the sequence reads like this:

“You may find it useful to repeat the process several times. Revise your paraphrase, in other words. Examine your results carefully and compare them with the original to see that what you have written is original, gives credit and repeats the essential information.”

Importance of reading during paraphrasing construction. A few of the websites mention that a writer starts from reading and re-reading. Twelve of the Writing Center websites’ step sequences start from the step of “reading”. Some of them emphasize that the reading process might happen more than one time. The process of “reading” might happen before or after drafting one’s own paraphrase. The metacognitive aspect of reading is also taken advantage of. North Carolina State University and the University of Nevada Las Vegas both propose a step which emphasizes that during paraphrasing process when reading the writer should have the goal of fully understanding the ideas or meanings in the source text. Many other universities hint at this step, but these two universities describe the step in the most explicit way.

These empirically reflect that paraphrasing tasks are one type of reading-to-write tasks [10]. It clearly shows us the indispensable relationship between reading and writing. The reading and writing processes are recursive. Reading process comes in whenever it is necessary. Reading process serves various types of needs during the writing process; that is, essentially comprehension process serves the needs of production process for members in the academic discourse community.

After analyzing the steps data around the topic of paraphrasing, we can find that the composition process of paraphrasing, ideally and theoretically, serves as an embodiment of the interaction between reading skills and writing skills in daily writing center practice.

4.4. “Ecological” resources for constructing paraphrases: paraphrasing tasks as linkage points of many resources

Monty [45] proposed an ecological system that Writing Centers websites have been creating, which could be attributed to their “high rate of and tolerance for pedagogical innovation” (as cited in [25], p. 251). A myriad of evidence for Monty’s claim has been found from the case for paraphrasing instructions on Writing Center websites. Writing Center website make use of various format of instructions, off-line training workshops, and recommendation through hyperlinks for other universities’ writing centers.

4.4.1. A role-model-type case combining exercises, examples and steps of paraphrasing construction.

Among the eight universities that only provide good examples, one university is Carnegie Mellon University Writing Center website, which has a handout on paraphrasing. The handout is somewhat different than those provided by other writing centers. On the handout, there are altogether four example paraphrases. The four examples help to demonstrate the four writing steps for constructing a paraphrase that could well be integrated into a writer's essay. All the four examples are eligible ones. In fact, the first one is a direct quote, despite the fact that the second half of the quotation mark was mistakenly forgotten. The four examples illustrate the three steps of the composing process: "repeat", "rephrase", and "respond" (Carnegie Mellon University Global Communication Center webpage). The third and fourth examples are two different ways of responding to the text. Both of them explicitly illustrate the rhetorical functions of the paraphrases, namely to support the writer's own purpose or argument. Explanation is alongside each of the four examples, and connects the language features of the examples with what a writer needs to do during the three steps.

Five other universities, all provided good examples of paraphrases, but there were no comments on why the paraphrases were legitimate and in what specific aspects they are well-written. Despite this, a list of guidelines for constructing paraphrases were right before the acceptable examples on each of their websites. Sometimes, the guidelines do not relate specifically to the example sentences; however, the example sentences could be very appropriate or an adequate example to illustrate the guiding principles listed.

4.4.2. Exercises following Examples as one format

Only three universities in this sample used exercise items to demonstrate the steps, which include Temple University, University of Michigan (identifying which one is strong and which one is weak), and University of Florida. Exercises could be a bridge to connect suggested steps or procedures and the examples of paraphrases. As we can speculate, guided exercises are more hands-on than other types of instructional formats. Students and instructors or faculty members can easily download the exercises. However, we have no idea how motivated university students will be to download the exercises and work on the exercises by themselves. Writing instructors might find it handy downloading these exercises and then distributing them in class, since a considerable number of instructors tend to turn to sources on the Internet to give students instructions on source use strategies [27]. Meanwhile, Yamada has emphasized that instructors could help writers to practice inferential thinking through exercises [12].

4.4.3. Paraphrasing: a peer-supported construct in the writing center virtual ecological system

External resources can be categorized into three groups: 1) hyper-links to the writing center websites managed by other universities; 2) information page for a face-to-face workshop hosted on campus within the university for students (four universities); 3) link to a YouTube video created by the same university and related to source use or paraphrasing.

4.4.3.1. Hyperlinks to Other Websites

Purdue University is one of the pioneer universities that promote an online Writing Center since more than two decades ago [22], which accompanies its physical Writing Center on campus. As we have known, many universities' Writing Center websites give the hyperlink of Purdue University's Online Writing Lab as one of their resources, and Purdue University's OWL has been playing a very important role in giving guidelines in academic writing [22,27]. In the current sample of universities, five university Writing Centers websites give the hyperlink of Purdue OWL as one of their resources. However, the hyperlinks provided by these five universities only lead website users to the mainpage of the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University; none of them goes to the specific OWL page presenting the contents related to "paraphrasing". Purdue OWL in fact has a specific webpage devoted to the process of constructing a legitimate paraphrase (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/quoting_paraphrasing_and_summarizing/paraphrasing.html). Tomas [27] posted the question about whether materials on avoiding plagiarism offered by Purdue OWL demonstrated an excellent example (p. 244), which requires further study.

Monty's portrayal of "writing center webspaces as ecosystem" is evident in the peer support that Writing Centers give each other and the collaboration with regard to paraphrasing instructions ([45], p. 68). A few universities give such links as Writing Centers by University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Toronto in Canada, and the University of Michigan (namely, Sweetland Center for Writing). Unlike those referring to the Purdue OWL main page, all these links connecting the websites of other universities go directly to the online platform of another writing center, featuring the topic of "paraphrasing" or at least having the sub-topic of "paraphrasing" as part of the content. The referencing practice among websites by different university writing centers seem to imply to us that strong bonds have been built among some of the Writing Centers in the nation, and some of the Writing Centers welcome collaboration. In the meantime, this also tells us that some universities agree with the proposed procedures of paraphrasing construction by some of their peer universities. Referencing to some external resources shows approval of the approaches provided by those institutions.

4.4.3.2. Face-to-face Workshops

As Salem [36] advocates, a writing center can be a suitable or even pioneering site to try out various pedagogical innovations (p. 165). In her words, a Writing Center itself can actually be a "pedagogical workshop" ([36], p. 165). Despite the metaphorical connotation in the quote, Writing Centers give workshops of various types. In recent years, workshops seem to be a trending format of Writing Centers' pedagogical innovation. Among the workshop with contents related to "paraphrasing" or at least "source use" listed by the Writing Centers on their websites, they seem to be of a few different types of nature. Some Writing Centers set a time schedule for the workshops to happen during a regular semester, and the workshops need instructors' recommendation so as to get publicized to the target student groups. For example, a workshop hosted by the Writing Center at the University of Southern California. Some of them are on-demand (or "upon-request") workshops. That means, they are available but they will only be brought to an enclosed group of students at the instructor's request. In this case, the trained representatives from the Writing Center will come to a specific lesson period during the scheduled/designated time slot for the course whose instructor makes such a request in advance. For example, the workshop

provided by the University of Washington. These are actually the major types of operational ways for the workshops on guidance in constructing paraphrases. Though they contain the key word of “paraphrasing” in their description or in their titles, the broader focus of those workshops are “source use” (or “avoiding plagiarism”). This confirms that most universities agree that “paraphrasing” is one of the most effective ways to help students to achieve the goal of using outside sources in an appropriate way when composing writing in English.

4. Conclusions

Faigley makes an appeal to the Writing Center field that we should “provide online resources” [46]. Paraphrasing instructions is one type of online resources that Writing Centers publicize on their website. The majority of the materials is open-access materials. The materials represent how the Universities’ Writing Centers define and contextualize the construct of paraphrasing. Tomas [27] found that online resources to help developing academic writers to avoid unintentional plagiarism have been a more preferred type of material than reference books (p. 229).

The current study is an attempt to find out one aspect/type of online resources, namely paraphrasing instructions, provided by university Writing Centers. It surveyed some existing instructional or pedagogical materials on paraphrasing offered by research-intensive higher education institutions to college students or faculty members, namely their intended users. It is by no means an exhaustive study, but the investigation to a large extent reflects the state-of-the-art of paraphrasing instructions by writing centers in these universities with high research activities. Careful examination was carried out to attempt answers to some key questions, first and foremost the lack of consensus in definition, in the paraphrasing literature, or even further to the English composition field. The analysis of paraphrasing instructional materials has showcased some examples to the universities that would potentially consider presenting paraphrasing instructional materials if they haven’t yet done so.

Pedagogical implications. Based on the findings from the “definitions” data, we can see that materials developers for the paraphrasing instructions reached consensus that paraphrasing is to use one’s expressions to write about other people’s ideas [31]. However, in other aspects, such as the order of presentation of information, there are some variations. Some of the paraphrasing instructions are original materials created by the materials developers themselves; others are adopted from some popular writing manuals or guidebooks. Therefore, writing instructions practitioners and writing manual developers have not yet reached agreement in the key notion of paraphrasing. Examples are helpful as one type of instructional material. When they are accompanied by comments, the strengths and weaknesses of them are more explicit to the writers. “Steps” data is one type that Yamada did not look into in her study. With detailed examination, steps data explicitly show that paraphrasing is a fluid process with recursive utilization of reading and writing skills. The step data makes the paraphrasing construction process more explicit and transparent to writers. Yamada [12] pointed out that the examples in her data were shown to be “with such elaboration that at first glance inexperienced writers may not realize how they were generated” (p. 250). Further research based on the current study could look into how elaborate the paraphrases are compared with the original texts.

Practical implications. Looking into instructions by universities in R-1 List from a pedagogical perspective, it is not difficult to find that the ways they guide

paraphrasing practice vary in the length of time, the different levels of detail, and emphasis on various types of techniques, etc. The current study could be helpful in raising the awareness of different stake-holders in the higher education institutions regarding what resources the more and more active university Writing Centers can offer.

First of all, the findings of the current study provide information for some Writing Centers which have been considering putting more resources on their websites that could be of further and more flexible and accessible assistance to their clients so as to go beyond the services that they have been offering so far. Resources on the Writing Center websites could be one way to reduce the probability of consultants' giving 'too much help' ([30], p. 309). With their overall goal being more and more "anti-disciplinary" ([47], p. 237), Writing Centers can better establish a solid ground for their alternative instead of supplementary role to the composition courses provided by a university [33,34].

Secondly, since it has become a trend for writing instructors to look for some online resources to assist paraphrasing instructions or to give students guidelines and to teach students strategies in avoiding plagiarism [27], it is noteworthy that current online resources from various credible and reputable higher education institutions have different emphases in various aspects of paraphrasing constructions. One of the possible ways for instructors to make the best of those materials is to examine paraphrasing materials from a few institutions so as to compile a relatively comprehensive toolkit to facilitate the teaching of paraphrasing instructions. Having a clear idea about how to construct acceptable paraphrases on the part of university instructors or professors could equip them in a more resourceful manner to give their students guidelines and feedback on paraphrases construction and furthermore their submissions of essays, as advocated by Roig ([5], p. 981).

After this investigation, a gap in the literature seems to be note-worthy, which is that guidance in material development is needed since discrepancy exists among the paraphrasing instructions materials presented on the web by different universities. Writing Studies researchers and second language writing researchers have been working on standardizing criteria for eligible paraphrasing practices. This is a vital aspect for college students' academic literacy and academic integrity.

Paraphrasing instructions by Writing Center online asynchronous Web sites, as a necessary part of paraphrasing instructions, which I believe is gaining in popularity and would play an increasingly important role, can carry writing educators and researchers one step further regarding the development of paraphrasing pedagogy and furthermore the theoretical development of college students' academic literacy.

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