Writing Paraphrases

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is clearly restating in your own words the ideas or thoughts of another person. A paraphrase differs from a summary, which tends to be much shorter and contains only the main ideas of a text.

Why do we need to paraphrase?

When writing, we include source material as evidence. Sometimes this evidence supports our argument(s). At other times, we may believe the evidence to be invalid and want to argue against it. Either way, ideas that are not our own must be represented accurately and clearly. Otherwise, our arguments will be ineffective and our writing will be confusing.

We also need to paraphrase because using another author’s exact words (when not directly quoted) is plagiarism, or academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is a violation of UNC’s Honor Code, and it has serious repercussions.

Characteristics of a good paraphrase

- It includes all of the author’s ideas.
- It includes only the author’s ideas.
- It is accurate and fair.
- It is entirely in your own words.
- It is properly cited.

How do we paraphrase?

Read and Understand

First, read the source material carefully so that you understand it. Identify its main claims and pieces of evidence. (TIP: When taking notes on a source, be sure to write them in your own words in order to avoid plagiarism later. Always write down where you got the information, including page numbers.)

Strategies for Paraphrasing

- Put the information in a new order.
- Break down complex ideas into smaller pieces.
- Use different vocabulary. Consult a thesaurus if necessary.
- Accurately represent the author. Be faithful to what s/he is saying.
- Imagine that you are explaining the material to a friend who doesn’t understand it well.
The global spread of English is not only an issue for teachers and learners of English. The unprecedented spread of one language and the extent of its use as a global lingua franca in many walks of life raises as many questions and concerns as does economic and cultural globalization. A fact which must certainly not be overlooked is that talk about ‘the global spread of English’ does not mean that having access to English in order to gain access to knowledge is a commodity available to all who desire it, nor that English as an international means of communication is welcome wherever it is available – far from it.” (Seidlhofer 7)

**Acceptable Paraphrase**

English has spread worldwide, and this is relevant for more people than just those who teach and learn the language. A single language has never spread in this way before, and its global status brings forth issues, just as do other types of globalization including the economic and the cultural. Indeed, although English is labeled as ‘global’, not everyone who wants to have a command of English in order to gain more information is able to do so. Likewise, even though in many situations people can use English for international dialogue, they do not do so. (Seidlhofer 7)

**Unacceptable Paraphrase**

The spreading of English worldwide is not only an issue for people who teach and learn English. I see this as a big problem. The spread of this one language is unprecedented, and its position as a global lingua franca by many different types of people creates many issues and problems as does economic and cultural globalization. An important fact is that although people talk about English spreading globally, this does not mean that using English to get more knowledge is something available to all who desire it. It also doesn’t mean that English as an international means of communication is always welcome. (Seidlhofer 7)

Orange words are ideas not found in the original writing. Purple words are plagiarized.
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