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Rewriting and paraphrasing source texts in second language writing

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Abstract

The present study is based on interviews with 48 students and 27 instructors in a North American university and explores whether students and professors across faculties share the same views on the use of paraphrased, summarized, and translated texts in four examples of L2 student writing. Participants' comments centered on whether the paraphrases contained too much copying and could be further paraphrased to incorporate one's own thinking, whether a citation was necessary for background information summarized in an introduction of the paper, and whether the translated text should be acknowledged to indicate either paraphrasing or copying of others' words. The relevant comments highlight disciplinary differences rather than differences between students and instructors, though the latter were more able to demonstrate further paraphrasing to incorporate one's own thinking. The study illustrates that students have difficulties in understanding how to paraphrase in order to avoid plagiarism because such

apparently straightforward academic literacy skills as paraphrasing or summarizing are in fact complex and depend on one's knowledge of the content, the disciplinary nature of citation practices, and the rhetorical purposes of using citations in a specific context of disciplinary writing.



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Keywords

Use of source texts; University writing; Textual appropriation; Paraphrase; Summary; Translated texts

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Ling Shi holds a PhD from the Ontario Institute of Education affiliated to the University of Toronto in Canada. She is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on second language writing and teaching English as a second language.

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