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Title: Reflecting on Academic Skills

In this reflection, I will evaluate the academic skills specifically focusing on paraphrasing, summarising and research skills I have learnt using the Gibbs' Reflective cycle as a framework. The Gibbs' model provides a structured approach to my reflection through 6 stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. (Main, 2023).

The first topic i will be talking about is paraphrasing skills. In class we watched a video (Learn Academic English, 2020) which briefly introduced us how to paraphrase. The video showed information about California and included facts about California. In the video the woman explained how we should firstly understand the information we are reading and how the paragraph is structured. I watched a video that used a California example to illustrate the idea of paraphrase. It simplified the process of figuring out the main ideas in a paragraph and then putting them into words that were understandable and different from the original. Examples were given in the video, including rephrasing concepts without losing their original meaning, changing sentence patterns, and using synonyms.

I had previously difficulty with paraphrasing, so at first, I was a little unsure about my ability to do it right. I frequently found myself either misrepresenting the original text's meaning or copying too much of it. Nevertheless, I felt more assured and prepared with techniques to enhance my paraphrase after seeing the video. The method seemed a lot more doable because of the concise examples, and I was inspired to attempt using these strategies in my own academic work.

I learnt a lot about the essential elements of paraphrasing from the video. The topic was easier for me to understand because of the clear illustrations and the detailed explanation. One of the video's advantages was that it demonstrated how to use paraphrase in practical situations rather than only clarifying it in principle, which made it easier for me to relate the skill to my own studies. The video could have, in my viewpoint, offered more guidance on how to paraphrase difficult academic literature, which would have been helpful for my more difficult assignments.

By instructing me to concentrate on the true meaning of the original text rather than just changing words, the video helped me develop into a better paraphraser. I came to see that effective paraphrasing involves more than just looking for synonyms; it also involves revising a sentence's structure and comprehending its context. This was a crucial lesson since it changed the way I approached concepts, moving me from simply "rewording" them to "rewriting" them to represent my comprehension of the subject. Additionally, I realised that paraphrasing is a skill

that needs to be practiced, particularly in academic settings where accuracy and clarity are essential.

In conclusion, the paraphrasing video was a helpful tool that improved my understanding of good paraphrasing techniques. It addressed common misunderstandings, such as the idea that paraphrasing just means changing a few words, and emphasised how crucial it is to rewrite the original material. I now have a clearer strategy for paraphrasing in future academic work and feel more assured in my abilities to do so.

Moving forward, I hope I can practice paraphrasing frequently. The video really helped me as a visual learner. In the future I will briefly bullet point the text that I'm paraphrasing to get a better understanding of the text. I will also try to paraphrase more complex academic texts to challenge myself and become an expert at paraphrasing.

The next academic skill I would like to introduce and have learnt is summarising. A thorough review of summarising as an academic skill was given in the PowerPoint presentation. It started out by defining summarising as the process of reducing a longer text into its essential points, keeping just the most crucial data and leaving out the rest. It also outlined the main distinctions between paraphrasing and summarising (Smith, n.d.), stressing that the former entails rewording certain passages or words in detail, while the latter concentrates on the main concepts or overall message. After that, the presentation included a step-by-step tutorial on how to summarise, covering topics like highlighting the most important ideas, shortening the text without losing its meaning, and making sure the summary was clear and short and simple. As the lesson came to an end, we were given the opportunity to put the abilities we had learnt into practice by summarising a simple text.

I have always been very confident in summarising texts as I think it's a very strong attribute of mine. However, summarizing at university level in my mind seemed like it may be more complex. Furthermore, after the presentation I felt extremely confident as the step-by-step guide and the task gave me the opportunity to practice summarising in an organised manner, this offered clarity.

The PowerPoint presentation clarified for me that summarising entails more than just condensing a document; it also entails identifying its major points and message. Since I had previously considered summarising and paraphrasing to be comparable skills, the obvious distinction between the two was especially enlightening. I'm now more aware of when to employ either strategy in academic writing as I know that paraphrasing deals with precise details, whilst summarising concentrates on a broader context. Having a set strategy to follow that I could apply to a range of texts made the step-by-step instruction really helpful. Although the exercise was helpful, it may have been improved if we had attempted to summarise larger, more intricate text passages.

I intend to routinely practice summarising a range of texts, particularly more complicated ones, to keep getting better at it. I'll make sure I'm adhering to a methodical approach and regularly recognising important elements by using the step-by-step instructions from the presentation. I'll also ask peers or instructors for input on my summaries to make sure I'm accurately collecting the important details. I want to get better at summarising over time, understanding what to include and what to leave out, and making sure my summaries are correct, clear, and logical.

The last valuable skill I have learnt in class and would like to talk about is finding and researching information. I was told by my lecturer Sylvia Hoffman in class that not all information is legit and thorough and how to define reliable information in contrast to deceptive information. In class we talked about the CRAAP test. The abbreviation stands for; Currency, Relevance, Accuracy, Purpose. (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2023). I felt confident in this topic and skill as I usually thoroughly read, and fact check data. However, using this test made me realise that information is not always true even if it's on websites like Wikipedia and YouTube which have a lot of exposure and popularity.

This method's clear, methodical framework, which made the information evaluation process simpler and more structured, was one of its advantages. I was able to evaluate each source with ease which made sure I didn't miss anything crucial like the author's credentials or the information's timeliness. The test's requirement for a thorough examination of every source, however, is one of its drawbacks. This can be time-consuming, particularly when working with a lot of data.

Prior to using the test, I had a tendency to concentrate mostly on the topic and the basic information provided by sources, without challenging their underlying reliability. For instance, applying the CRAAP Test made me recognise how crucial it is to confirm the reliability of a source, especially in rapidly changing industries like technology or health.

In conclusion task discussions and the use of this test opened my eyes and enhanced my ability to find reliable information. In the future, I will use the CRAAP test and only use trustworthy information for my academic writing.

References:

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