

- **ACADEMIC SKILLS**
- **MODULE CODE: LCLM4001_LON**
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1. Introduction

About my experiences in the Academic Skills module, specifically concentrating on three crucial areas: taking notes, summarising, and paraphrasing. I faced both difficulties and chances for improvement in these areas as a Bangladeshi student adjusting to academic English. While I found the linear note-taking method to be a good fit for my learning style, summarising complex books was particularly challenging. Building my academic confidence and acclimating to the difficulties of university-level study have been greatly aided by these experiences. I will examine how these abilities have affected my learning in my reflection and pinpoint areas that require further work as I advance in my academic career.

2. Description of Experiences

At first, the module's concentration on paraphrasing and summing seemed intimidating. We practiced summarising scholarly articles in Week 3, and I often caught myself either repeating words verbatim or reducing the material to the point where important implications were lost. This problem was brought to light in my tutor's feedback, which stated that my summaries missed the original texts' subtleties. Week 4's paraphrasing exercises were a little easier to handle. Rephrasing concepts in my own words made me feel more at ease, but it was still difficult to keep the tone academically suitable. I became more conscious of the delicate balance that academic writing requires between accuracy and originality as a result of this.

On the other hand, taking notes was a more beneficial feature of the module. We looked at a number of approaches in Week 2, and the linear approach—which included headings and bullet points—fit my learning style the best. I used this method to arrange important dates and events in an understandable manner during a lecture on European history. In addition to making it easier for me to review the content quickly, the framework was especially beneficial because English is not my first language. I was even more confident in this strategy after a classmate said, "Your notes are so easy to follow."

I learnt from these experiences that although some abilities need constant work and improvement, others can fit in well with my cognitive preferences and efficiently aid in my learning.

3. Analysis and Personal Reflection

Summarising and Paraphrasing

My difficulties with summarising largely stemmed from a fear of misrepresenting the original meaning. For example, when condensing a passage on climate change, I either included too many details or omitted key points entirely. This challenge reflects a broader difficulty I encounter in English: balancing precision and conciseness, especially as a second-language speaker.

However, feedback from Task 1 helped shift my perspective. I came to understand that summarising is not about achieving perfect brevity, but rather about accurately capturing the core ideas of a text. Bailey (2018) highlights summarising as a foundational academic skill, which further motivated me to continue practising and improving.

Paraphrasing felt slightly less intimidating, but I still faced challenges. Initially, I would simply substitute words with synonyms while maintaining the original sentence structure—an approach my tutor identified as "patchwriting."

My turning point came when I began reading sentences aloud in Bangla first, then translating them into my own English words. This technique, though time-consuming, improved my ability to rephrase concepts authentically. Cottrell (2019) notes that paraphrasing is a skill developed through repetition, and I now see progress in my ability to reword sources while retaining clarity.

Note taking Strength

My demand for order and clarity was perfectly satisfied by the linear note-taking method.

I was able to convey knowledge in a logical, hierarchical structure using the linear approach, in contrast to visual strategies like mind maps, which I found to be overpowering and disorganised. This approach made revision more effective by reflecting how I naturally absorb and retain information. My classmates regularly remarked on how easy it was to follow my notes and how clear they were during group study sessions. This encouraging response demonstrated that the linear approach was advantageous for group projects as well as for my own learning. The simplicity of headings, bullet points, and numbered lists helped me organise complex lecture material, ensuring I could quickly locate key concepts when preparing for exams or assignments.

Areas for Improvement

Despite advancements, difficulties still exist. Even now, summarising seems awkward, particularly when dealing with lengthy materials. As advised by my coach, I intend to start by practicing with shorter sections in order to remedy this. Another flaw is the use of references. I now double-check my Harvard-style citations because I

frequently fail to include commas (University of London, 2023). Furthermore, even though I've gotten better at paraphrasing, I still sometimes rely too much on source structure. To get around this, I shall methodically assess my paraphrases using Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle

Personal Growth

My academic attitude was completely changed by this subject, especially in terms of getting past my early summing issues. I discovered through practice that it's not an insurmountable task, but rather a skill that can be developed. Using the linear note-taking method was equally important since it taught me to trust methods that work for me, even if they don't align with those of my peers. Above all, I've accepted that academic development happens gradually. My progress was aided by every assignment and feedback session, which was particularly freeing for me as a Romanian student learning English.

Consistent progress replaced perfection as the most important thing, which helped me feel less stressed and more confident. These teachings go beyond the classroom and provide insightful guidelines for learning throughout one's life and overcoming obstacles.

4. Conclusion

My note-taking and paraphrase skills have improved greatly as a result of the Academic Skills module's organised activities and tutoring.

Even if summarising is still difficult for me, my improvement shows how important focused practice and helpful criticism from peers and teachers are. A mainstay of my study regimen, the linear note-taking method is particularly helpful during moments of intense review. Going forward, I will devote more time to understanding referencing specifics and concentrate on honing my summarising strategies through gradual exercises. Along with giving me useful academic tools, this subject has helped me develop resilience and adaptability, two qualities that will help me in both my academic and professional endeavours.

References

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