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Summary writing in a Thai EFL university context

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that L2 writers experience difficulty writing summaries of texts in ways that avoid direct copying or superficial modifications to source text sentences, but fewer studies have explored whether summary writing instruction leads to improved textual appropriation. The current study analyzes three summary paragraphs written by Thai EFL university students ($N = 46$) during a 17-week EFL writing class that included explicit instruction in paragraph writing and paraphrasing strategies. Their texts were analyzed in terms of the rhetorical organization of a summary paragraph and the incorporation of source text information. The findings revealed a significant increase in the number of students who explicitly referenced the source texts, along with significant changes in the occurrence of copied and modified word strings. Considerations for the use of summary writing in EFL settings are discussed.
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Keywords: Summary writing; Verbatim copying; Low-proficiency EFL writers

Introduction

Although it is widely acknowledged that the ability to use information from sources is a crucial skill in academic writing, considerable debate remains across disciplines as to what constitutes an ‘‘appropriate’’ use of source texts and how to help writers avoid textual misappropriation (for recent overviews see Polio & Shi, 2012 and Shaw & Pecorari, 2013). In addition to conceptual challenges and disciplinary variation, L2 writers may experience difficulty incorporating source text information into their own writing because of low reading comprehension skills (Esmaeili, 2002; Plakans, 2009) and limits on their vocabulary knowledge (Baba, 2009). It may be particularly difficult for lower-proficiency L2 writers to restate source information without copying entire stretches of words exactly as they appeared in the text (i.e., verbatim or exact copying) or making largely superficial, word-level modifications (Cumming, Kantor, Baba, Erdosy, Eouanzoui, & James, 2005; Currie, 1998; Gebril & Plakans, 2009; Johns & Mayes, 1990). Verbatim copying has been shown to occur to varying degrees across instructional and assessment settings when L2 writers compose different kinds of texts, ranging from argumentative essays (Weigle, 2004; Weigle & Parker, 2012), research papers (Shi, 2008, 2012), expository essays (Cumming et al., 2005; Li & Casanave, 2012), opinion essays (Shi, 2004),

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literature reviews (Pecorari & Shaw, 2012; Wette, 2010), dissertations (Pecorari, 2003), to summaries (Keck, 2006; Kim, 2001; Shi, 2004).

Verbatim copying occurs to varying degrees across different text types, but it may be particularly prevalent in summary writing. In summary writing as a stand-alone task, the purpose is to restate all main ideas, which requires that the writer completely understand the text and make judgments about which details can be omitted or condensed without losing the main gist or emphasis of the original text (Kim, 2001). It also requires the ability to manipulate words and structures in ways that retain the meaning of the source text but replace words with synonyms and change sentence structure (Baba, 2009). The use of summary writing to assess reading comprehension or to check understanding of course content (Abasi & Akbari, 2008) may encourage students to reproduce source text information closely as a form of knowledge display rather than more selectively appropriate main ideas and reasons. This contrasts with other types of source-based writing in which writers are expected to 'mine' source texts for specific types of information (quotations, statistics, claims) that are useful for supporting their main ideas (Plakans, 2009). When selectively sampling source texts, it may be unnecessary to restate the entire content of a source text, and any sections of the source text that are irrelevant for the writer's purpose can be ignored.

Even though summary writing can serve as a foundation of some academic tasks (such as an annotated bibliography; see Kirszner & Mandell, 2011), summarizing is often presented in L1 academic writing textbooks, along with paraphrasing and quoting, as a technique for integrating and synthesizing sources in research-based writing (for discussion of the distinctions between paraphrasing and summarizing, see Hirvela & Du, 2013). English L2 writing textbooks designed for higher proficiency students (e.g., McCormack & Slaght, 2009; Oshima & Hogue, 2006) are similar to the L1 books discussed above in that they describe summarizing and paraphrasing as skills that are useful for integrating and synthesizing sources. In these textbooks, summarizing is presented as a strategy for incorporating information into source-based writing in ways that support the writer's own purpose or argument. Instruction is focused on helping novice writers develop multiple strategies that can be deployed when writing academic texts (e.g., essays, literature reviews, or research reports) that require reference to information obtained from source materials.

In contrast, writing textbooks designed for lower-proficiency L2 writers often present summary writing as an independent writing task. Textbooks that focus on the development of paragraph-level writing skills (e.g., Blanchard & Root, 2010; Reid, 1994) provide explicit instruction in summary writing consisting of information about the rhetorical structure and length of summary paragraphs. For example, common guidelines are that summaries should be shorter than the original text and need to include main ideas but not details. These textbooks also highlight the importance of a topic sentence that explicitly states the author, title of article, and main idea of the source text in a single sentence, followed by supporting sentences that restate the main points, and a concluding statement which captures the author's main idea. This explicit information is often followed by activities that promote recognition of the correct placement of these key components in a summary paragraph, such as underlining the topic sentence in paragraphs or putting scrambled sentences from a summary paragraph into the correct order. This approach to summary writing also involves a strong connection with reading comprehension, which is evident through sequences of activities in which students are asked to read a short text, answer reading comprehension questions, and then either select the most appropriate example summary or write their own summary.

Previous studies that focused specifically on summary writing investigated writers' ability to provide a brief overview of a single text without requiring them to integrate the source text information into a larger piece of writing (Abasi, 2012; Baba, 2009; Chen & Su, 2012; Choy & Lee, 2012; Keck, 2006; Kim, 2001; Liao & Tseng, 2010; Shi, 2004; Wichadee, 2010). Summary writing studies that focused on textual appropriation (Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004) found that summaries written by L2 writers contained more verbatim copying and near copies of source text information than those composed by L1 writers, who tended to make more substantial revisions across syntactic constituents. In addition, the occurrence of verbatim copying by L2 writers was greater in summaries than opinion essays (Shi, 2004). Studies that elicited writers' perceptions of summary writing and paraphrasing (Chen & Su, 2012; Choy & Lee, 2012; Liao & Tseng, 2010) have identified text comprehension and difficulty rephrasing source text information as potential problems for L2 writers, with word substitution and re-ordering strategies viewed more favorably than syntactic changes (Sun, 2009).

Despite the accumulation of evidence that L2 writers experience difficulty summarizing and paraphrasing sentences from source texts, relatively few studies have explored how L2 writers' summaries and textual appropriation skills develop over time in instructional settings. Four studies have examined how L2 writers' ability to paraphrase changed over time while they were enrolled in a writing courses at universities in Australia (Wette, 2010), Malaysia (Choy & Lee, 2012), Taiwan (Chen & Su, 2012) and Thailand (Wichadee, 2010). Wette (2010) examined students'

ability to incorporate source-based information into a larger piece of writing, which reflects the type of academic writing her students were required to do in their university classes. She found that students were able to complete a partially-written essay using information from source texts with less copying over time (dropping from approximately 35% to 5%) and could use accurate and complete citations for nearly half (45%) of the citations they included in an out -of- class source-based writing assignment. The students self-reported difficulty with condensing and transforming source information, as well as locating appropriate synonyms and superordinate terms.

Focusing more narrowly on stand-alone summary writing, the studies carried out in Asian university contexts examined whether a genre approach to teaching summary writing (Chen & Su, 2012), an inquiry-based approach (Choy & Lee, 2012), or the use of wikis (Wichadee, 2010) helped students improve their ability to write summaries. Although two studies (Choy & Lee, 2012; Wichadee, 2010) reported that students' written summaries showed improved quality over time, the researchers did not provide detailed information about how the summaries were analyzed. These studies included questionnaire data, which revealed several challenges reported by the students when writing summaries, including difficulty locating main ideas in the source texts, inadequate vocabulary knowledge, and problems restructuring source text sentences. Similar concerns about vocabulary and grammar development were also expressed by the students in Chen and Su's study (2012), who received instruction about how to summarize narrative literary texts. Analysis of the students' summaries of the same abridged novel at the beginning and end of the instructional unit (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*), revealed improved ratings for the content, organization, vocabulary, and language use, although the degree of improvement was greater for content and organization. The students' ability to use source text information (i.e., copying versus paraphrasing strategies) was beyond the scope of the analysis, but the researchers reported student comments from focus group interviews that highlighted issues with vocabulary and grammar.

To summarize, previous studies of English L2 summary writing have shown that L2 writers tend to use more verbatim copying than English L1 writers (Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004) and rely on textual appropriation strategies involving word-level changes rather than more global modifications (Keck, 2006; Kim, 2001; Shi, 2004). Previous studies have described the challenges faced by L2 writers when composing summaries and have provided some insight into how their summary writing abilities (Chen & Su, 2012; Choy & Lee, 2012; Wichadee, 2010) and paraphrasing strategies (Wette, 2010) change over time in instructional settings that provide explicit instruction in summary writing. The current study aims to contribute to this body of research by providing additional insight into the development of summary writing by L2 English writers at a Thai university. The present study focuses on stand-alone summaries because the EFL writers in this Thai university context have not yet gained the writing proficiency necessary to produce essay-length texts. Although writing textbooks (as well as other classroom activities) introduce summary writing to such relatively low proficiency writers, the degree to which such instruction is effective for students at this level has been understudied.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore how Thai EFL students' summary paragraph writing changed over time while they were enrolled in an EFL course that provided explicit instruction about paragraph writing and paraphrasing strategies. The first research question was *Do Thai EFL writers include explicit reference to a source text in their summary paragraphs?* Because the organization of summaries written by EFL university students has been shown to improve with instruction (Chen & Su, 2012), and the rhetorical structure of written genres may be particularly salient to learners (Leki, 2011), we predicted that the Thai EFL writers would show increased use of topic sentences with explicit reference to the source text following instruction. The second research question was *Do Thai EFL writers use verbatim copying of source texts in their summary paragraphs?* In light of the previous research that documented the higher occurrence of verbatim copying in summaries as opposed to opinion essays written by EFL students (Shi, 2004) and EFL students' self-reported difficulties with vocabulary and the restructuring of sentences during summary writing (Chen & Su, 2012; Choy & Lee, 2012; Wichadee, 2010), we expected only modest reductions in their use of verbatim copying. The research questions were addressed through a repeated-measures, within-groups design that explored whether explicit source text referencing and verbatim copying in the summary paragraphs written by Thai EFL students changed while they were enrolled in an EFL writing class.

Method

Participants

The participants were 46 undergraduate students (38 women and 8 men) at a large, public university in Northern Thailand who were taking a required English as a foreign language (EFL) class. The students were all native speakers

of Thai and ranged in age from 18 to 22, with a mean age of 19.3 years (SD = .7). They were pursuing undergraduate degrees in a variety of academic disciplines, which included agro-industry, science, and engineering (n = 28); fine arts and humanities (n = 11); and economics and law (n = 7). They reported having studied English previously for 8–17 years, with a mean of 14.3 years (SD = 2.0). As non-English major students, the participants did not take any standardized tests of English proficiency, and were not required to write in English for any courses in their areas of specialization. The majority of the students (n = 41) had never traveled to a country where English was used as a medium of communication, but three students reported stays of one week while two students reported stays of 90 days.

Instructional context

The students were taking a required EFL class for non-English majors taught by the third researcher that met for two 90-minute periods per week for a total of 30 class periods (excluding holidays and midterm week) in a 17-week semester. The class was designed to develop students' critical thinking and reading abilities and foster paragraph-level writing skills (see Appendix A for an overview of the class). The textbook was created by a team of department faculty members for use with low-intermediate level students and included a variety of written texts, ranging from cartoons, jokes, headlines, and advertisements to news reports adapted from *Reader's Digest*. With the exception of three longer texts (200–500 words), most of the texts were short (20–100 words) with Flesch-Kincaid grade levels ranging from 1.1 to 8.4. In terms of writing, the textbook focused on sentence-level writing in the first two chapters, and emphasized short (80–120 word) paragraph writing in the remaining four chapters, with each chapter introducing a different rhetorical style (summary, compare/contrast, cause/effect, problem/solution).

Summary writing was introduced in chapter three following the format typically found in low-intermediate writing textbooks (e.g., Blanchard & Root, 2010; Reid, 1994). The chapter provided information about the purpose of writing summary paragraphs and described four steps in the process: stating the main idea of the text in their own words, identifying the main points used to support the main idea by using questioning techniques and taking notes, stating the author's conclusion in one sentence, and finally putting away the original text and creating a summary paragraph using their own words. The suggested length for a summary was one-third the length of the original text. In terms of the rhetorical structure of summary paragraphs, the textbook stated specifically that students must explicitly mention the source text. Three models were provided to illustrate different ways of stating the author and the title in a topic sentence (e.g., *The article, "The Negative Effect of Jogging Alone," by Jack Johnson claims that jogging alone can be unhealthy*). As a practice activity, the students read a 200-word news report about the health benefits of jogging and answered comprehension and vocabulary questions. They were given an outline of the jogging text that stated the topic, main idea, main points, and conclusion in note form, and were asked to use the information in the outline to write a summary paragraph without copying directly from the text or the outline.

In terms of the use of source text information, the chapter provided information about how copying from source texts is considered plagiarism, the reasons why copying should be avoided, and tools for helping students restate the main ideas in their own words instead of copying directly from the source text. Four specific paraphrasing strategies were introduced, with two techniques related to word-level modifications (changing the part of speech or using synonyms) and two techniques for sentence-level changes (moving phrases, dividing or combining sentences). This explicit information about how to paraphrase was followed by sentence-level interpretation activities (select which sentence is a more effective paraphrase) and writing activities (provide a paraphrase for the underlined sentence in a short text). Although different types of paragraphs were introduced in subsequent chapters, the underlying principles of paragraph organization, note-taking, and the use of paraphrase to report source text information that were introduced for summary writing were reinforced throughout the course.

Materials and procedure

Three summary writing tests were created by the researchers to complement the content focus of the course textbook in weeks four (health and nutrition), twelve (advertising claims), and sixteen (consumerism). Each test provided a source text from *Reader's Digest*, an area for note-taking, and space for writing a summary paragraph by hand. Each source text had a title and author credit followed by four paragraphs, with the first paragraph stating a popular belief and then questioning its accuracy (e.g., *Many dieters believe that exercise helps people lose weight. However, a recent TIME magazine suggests that this belief might be wrong*). The second and third paragraphs provided

several reasons why the belief was incorrect and made reference to the findings of research studies. The concluding paragraph acknowledged potential disadvantages of overindulgence in the activities described in the text, such as over-exercising or taking too many vitamins. The texts ranged in length from 191 to 195 words and had a reading ease score of 65.1–65.3, which is typical for *Reader's Digest*, and a grade level of 7.2. All three texts used for the summary writing tests are provided in Appendix B.

The data were collected during one academic semester (17 weeks) in two EFL classes taught by the third researcher. Consent, background information, and a practice sentence writing activity were administered in weeks one and two, followed by the summary writing pretest in week four. The instruction about summary paragraphs and paraphrasing strategies described previously was provided in weeks five through seven. The two summary writing posttests were administered in weeks 12 and 16. The summary writing tests were implemented following the same procedures used for in-class writing assessments and exams. The students were given the source texts along with a separate page for taking notes and had 20 minutes to read and take notes.[1] The source texts were collected, and the students had 20 minutes to write a summary paragraph.

Analyses

Because the textbook highlighted two aspects of summary writing, reference to source texts and paraphrasing, the students' summary writing paragraphs were analyzed in terms of (a) the provision of a topic sentence with explicit reference to the source text and (b) the occurrence of verbatim copying of source text sentences. In summary writing, it is typical to explicitly refer to the source at the beginning of summary, after which it is not necessary to repeatedly cite it (Hogue, 2003; Ramage & Bean, 2000). Therefore, explicit referencing was coded as a binary distinction, with each student summary coded as either including or omitting a topic sentence that contained explicit reference to the source text. Summaries that contained the types of sentences illustrated in (1) were classified as having explicitly referenced the source text by stating its title and source (1a), its title (1b), or another source mentioned in the *Reader's Digest* text (1c).

(1) a. Reader's Digest Editors in "Shopping and Health" mention that shopping is a bad habit, but the research found that regular shoppers live longer than less frequent shoppers.
b. The article "Shopping and Health" says that shopping can help people live longer.
c. Many people believe shopping is bad habit; however, TIME magazine says that belief might be wrong because shopping can help them live longer.

For the occurrence of verbatim copying, each sentence in the student summaries was analyzed for word strings from the source texts. A sentence was defined in orthographic terms, with a sequence of words counted as a sentence if it started with a capital letter and ended with a period, regardless of its grammatical status. Each sentence in the student summary was coded for word strings containing at least two content words that were identical to the source text. The word strings were classified into two of the three coding categories proposed in Shi's framework (2004) and adopted by Weigle and Parker (2012). These two categories, copied and modified, reflect differences in the degree of similarity between a word string and a source text.[2]

Copied word strings were verbatim copies of a series of words from the source text. Strings that were identical to the source text except for an inflectional morpheme or a single letter were counted as copies. A copied word string in a student summary could include words that occurred across syntactic constituents in the source text. For example, the source text about vitamins included the sentence "*But a recent study found that taking these vitamins can have negative health effects*" which appeared in a student summary as "*study found that taking these vitamins can have negative.*" The copied word string contained content words in the source text that appear in a noun phrase/subject (*study*), verb phrase (*found*) and subordinate clause (*that taking these vitamins can have negative*). Modified word strings were a series of words from the source text to which a student had made word-level changes within a syntactic constituent. For example, the source

[1] An anonymous reviewer asked whether the students simply copied the entire source text during the 20 minute note-taking time. An analysis of the students' notes was beyond the scope of the current study, but in response to the reviewer's query we confirmed that no students had copied the entire source text. Most of the students' notes consisted of a bullet outline.

[2] This framework also includes a third category of Reformulation, but it was excluded from the analysis for two reasons. First, only 18 strings that could be considered instances of reformulation occurred in the entire data set of 138 student summaries. Second, those 18 strings consisted of conjoined modified and copied strings as opposed to the types of reformulations defined in previous studies.

Table 1
Coding categories with examples.

Category	Definition	Source text	Student summary
Copied	A string of words within or across constituents in the source text that was copied exactly	*Unlike going to a fitness center or playing sports*, people can shop anywhere.	And unlike going to a fitness center or playing sports shows that by research.
		People can easily buy vitamins at supermarkets and health food stores or online.	However many people can easily buy vitamins at supermarkets and health of vitamins and they can be difficult.
Modified	A string of words that occurred within a constituent in the source text that was modified in the student summary through the use of synonyms or by reordering, adding, or removing words	But remember that *eating a balanced diet* can provide you with all of the vitamins you need.	People should eat a balanced diet or ask your doctor for good health.
		If shoppers *buy fresh food* daily, then they may have a healthy diet.	Moreover, shopping regularly make shopper have a fresh food, it is good for their health.

text about shopping and health included the sentences "*However, a recent TIME magazine suggests that this belief might be wrong.*" This information appeared in a student summary as "*. . .but, this belief is wrong.*" In this case, the student made a modification to the verb phrase of the source text sentence by changing the verb from *might be* to *is*. Definitions of the coding categories along with additional examples are provided in Table 1.

The second researcher met with a research assistant to explain and illustrate the copied and modified coding categories using examples from the data set. Next, they independently coded the pretest summaries, compared their coding decisions, and resolved any disagreements through discussion, achieving 100% agreement. They clarified the coding guidelines to address their disagreements from the pretest data and then used the revised coding guidelines to independently code the two post-tests. After coding each posttest, they compared coding decisions and resolved any disagreement through discussion. When they had completed all of the data coding, the researcher then trained a second research assistant in the coding procedures, who independently coded 20% of the dataset. Interrater reliability was 92% (192 agreements/209 coding decisions) based on simple percentage agreement, and Cohen's kappa was .884. Alpha was set at .05 for all statistical tests.

Results

The first research question asked whether Thai EFL students include explicit reference to a source text in their summary paragraphs. Following the convention for summary writing (Hogue, 2003; Ramage & Bean, 2000) and the instructional materials the students received, reference to the source text was coded as a binary distinction based on the presence or absence of a topic sentence that stated the source. The number of students who explicitly referred to the source text in their topic sentence for each test is illustrated in Fig. 1. Whereas only 30% of the students included explicit reference to the source text on the pretest, the use of explicit reference increased to 83% for post 1 and 80% for post 2.

A Cochran's Q test (a nonparametic test of related samples for categorical data) indicated that the change over time was significant [$Q(2, 46) = 44.09$, $p < .00$], and individual McNemar's tests (a nonparametric test of two related samples for categorical data) revealed significant increases from the pretest to post 1 ($p < .00$) and from the pretest to post 2 ($p < .00$). As for the specific method of source citation, no student referred to title and source (illustrated in Example 1a) in the pretest, but two-thirds of the students used this convention for both posttests.

The second research question asked whether Thai EFL students use verbatim copying from source texts in their summary paragraphs. The occurrence of copied and modified word strings over time is shown in Table 2. The students used copied strings most frequently in the post 2 summaries ($M = 4.02$), while they used modified strings most often in the post 1 summaries ($M = 2.79$). Because there were no significant differences in the length of the student summaries over time [$F(2, 46) = 1.87$, $p = .16$], the frequency counts for each string type were compared across the three tests.[3]

[3] The identical statistical procedures were carried out on proportion scores (raw strategy use divided by summary length in words), and the same findings were obtained.

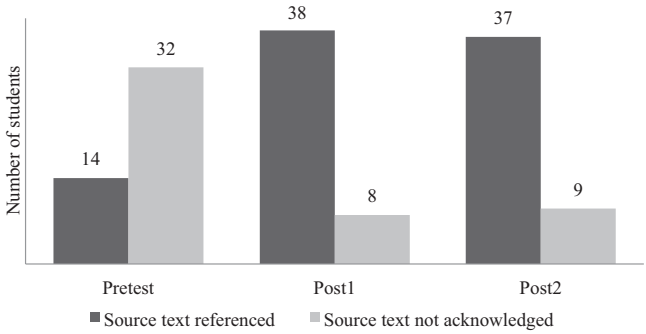

Fig. 1. Source text referencing over time.

Table 2
Use of source text information by type and time.

	Summary length		Copied strings			Modified strings		
	M	SD	Sum	*M*	SD	Sum	*M*	SD
Pretest	77.07	20.81	132	2.96	2.14	75	1.42	1.59
Post1	83.24	23.84	115	2.92	2.30	144	2.79	1.89
Post2	81.07	22.33	185	4.02	2.28	92	1.88	1.87

A Friedman's test (a non-parametric repeated-measures ANOVA) indicated a significant difference across time, $\chi^2(2, 46) = 16.77$, $p < .000$, and post hoc comparisons were carried out using Wilcoxon signed ranks tests (a non-parametric paired-samples *t*-test) with an adjusted alpha level of .025. More copied strings occurred in the post 2 summaries than the pretest ($Z = 2.86$, $p = .003$) and post 1 ($Z = 3.76$, $p < .000$) summaries. A Friedman's test also revealed a significant difference in the use of modified strings across time, $\chi^2(2, 46) = 14.87$, $p = .001$, with more modified strings in their post 1 summaries than their pretest ($Z = 3.75$, $p < .000$) or post 2 ($Z = 3.76$, $p < .000$) summaries.

Because the finding that students used more copied word strings after receiving instruction in paraphrasing techniques was counter-intuitive, the length of the students' copied strings was considered in light of previous research that compared copied strings of different lengths: 3–4 words, 5–8 words, 9–12 words, 13–20 words and 21+ words (Weigle & Parker, 2012). Because the texts in the current data were much shorter that those analyzed by Weigle and Parker, only three length categories were considered: 2–4 words, 5–8 words, or 9+ words. Proportion scores were obtained by dividing the number of strings in each length category by the total number of copied strings. As shown in Table 3, the mean proportion of 5–8 word strings and 9+ word strings decreased over time, while the mean proportion of 2–4 word strings increased over time.

Separate Friedman tests for each string length indicated that there was a significant difference in the students' use of 2–4 word strings ($\chi^2 = 6.98$, $p = .031$) and 5–8 word strings ($\chi^2 = 10.32$, $p = .006$) over time, but no significant differences in their use of 9+ word strings ($\chi^2 = .85$, $p = .654$). The post hoc comparisons using Wilcoxon signed ranks tests indicated the students used significantly more 2–4 word strings on their post 1 summaries ($Z = 2.02$, $p = .044$) and post 2 summaries ($Z = 2.16$, $p = .031$) than they did in their pretest summaries. The students used significantly fewer

Table 3
Proportion of copied strings by length and time.

	2–4 words		5–8 words		9+ words	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	.24	.39	.44	.36	.32	.34
Post1	.38	.38	.35	.36	.27	.39
Post2	.36	.30	.23	.28	.24	.31

5–8 word strings in the post 2 summaries than they did on the pretest ($Z = 3.12$, $p = .02$) and post 1 ($Z = 2.57$, $p = .010$) summaries. Thus, the more detailed analysis of copied strings clarified that the increase in verbatim copying over time was due to the students' increased use of short word strings (2–4 words).

Discussion

To summarize the findings for the first research question about source text referencing, after this aspect of summary writing was taught, more than three-quarters of the students referred to the article and the source in the first sentence of their summaries on both posttests. While this finding contrasts with Keck (2006), who found that the majority of the L1 and L2 attempted paraphrases did not include a reference, our analysis classified explicit reference as a binary distinction for the entire summary, which contrasts with Keck's focus on source referencing in every attempted paraphrase. In addition, the source texts in the current study were shorter and easier than the source texts used in her study (1000 words, 11.2 grade level) where repetition of the source text may serve a more important function than in the much shorter texts analyzed here. Providing simpler texts and requiring shorter summaries (only one paragraph) may have helped these EFL students focus on one salient rhetorical feature of source-based writing, i.e., acknowledging the source text in the first sentence, that they were able to understand and apply readily in subsequent summaries. Improved organization was also reported by Chen and Su (2012), who examined EFL learners' ability to summarize a narrative source text. Taken together, these findings indicate that learners may be able to incorporate explicit instruction about organization more readily than other aspects of summary writing.

In terms of the second research question, the findings confirm those of previous studies which also documented the difficulties faced by L2 writers when incorporating source text information into written summaries (Chen & Su, 2012; Choy & Lee, 2012; Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004). Although the overall use of copied strings increased over time, a potentially positive finding is that the increase was due to a greater use of short copied strings (2–4 words) and a decrease in longer copied strings (5–8 words). For example, in the pre-test summary, one student copied nine words from the source text sentence "*But before you give up your gym membership, remember that regular exercise has physical and mood-lifting benefits*" into his own summary ("*However*, *<u>remember that regular exercise has physical and mood-lifting benefits</u>*"). In contrast, on post 1, the student copied only three words from the source text sentence "*As a result, they may think that vitamins are natural and safe*" to start a new sentence in his own summary (*<u>Vitamins are natural</u>*. . ."). A previous comparative study (Shi, 2004) showed that whereas both L1 and L2 writers copied short strings (2–3 words) from source texts with or without explicit reference, L2 writers copied longer strings without explicit reference more often than L1 writers. The current findings suggest that these EFL students may have become aware that it is necessary to change the wording of the source texts and gradually reduced the length of their verbatim copied strings over time. In other words, the path toward successful paraphrasing may not be a simple reduction in the overall quantity of copied strings, but may involve intermediary stages in which the overall number of copied strings remains constant or even increases, but the length of copied strings decreases.

Finally, another aspect of the students' summary paragraphs that showed improvement over time was the increased occurrence of modified word strings, although the increase was not maintained by the second posttest. Previous research has identified reading comprehension as a contributing factor in students' verbatim copying (Esmaeili, 2002; Plakans, 2009), which raises the possibility that these students did not use many modification strategies because they did not comprehend the texts. However, because the source texts were fairly easy (7th grade level) and short (less than 200 words), it seems unlikely that reading comprehension or text difficulty accounts for the findings. One possible explanation is that these students did not have the linguistic resources necessary to perform more extensive revisions to the source text sentences. Previous studies that elicited L2 writers' perceptions about their ability to write summaries and use paraphrasing strategies (Chen & Su, 2012; Choy & Lee, 2012) found that vocabulary and grammar were perceived as barriers to successful textual appropriation. The results of the current study suggest that students may use an intermediate strategy of frequent, shorter copied strings as a way to compensate for the gaps in their linguistic knowledge that pose a barrier to more substantial modifications of source text information.

Implications

In terms of writing instruction, one implication of the findings is that instruction in the organizational features of written texts may be an aspect of writing that lower-proficiency EFL writers find salient and can apply in their own

writing. Previous studies with both L1 (Kirkpatrick & Klein, 2009; Segev-Miller, 2004) and L2 writers (Zhang, 2013) have revealed a positive relationship between instruction and the rhetorical structure of students' source-based written texts. In EFL contexts such as the one reported here, writing classes are often organized according to text types, beginning with paragraph-level texts (e.g., compare/contrast or cause/effect paragraphs) for lower-proficiency writers, increasing to multi-paragraph texts (e.g., argumentative or opinion essays) for more intermediate writers, to more authentic academic texts (research proposals and reports) for advanced writers, such as English major students. This focus on text types lends itself to genre-theory perspective on L2 writing (for an overview, see Tardy, 2012), which is a multi-dimensional approach to building rhetorical knowledge, along with subject-matter knowledge, formal knowledge (i.e., discursive and linguistic features), and process knowledge to understand and acquire socially-situated writing. However, instruction that emphasizes a basic rhetorical 'frame' for a specific genre and repeatedly practices that frame may result in formulaic writing at the expense of other dimensions of L2 writing (Leki, 2011). While formulaic writing of this type may inhibit other aspects of writing development for higher proficiency writers, the findings presented here suggest that rhetorical instruction may be useful for lower-level writers. Providing these students with information about the rhetorical structure that they can apply in their own written texts may help them focus on other aspects of their writing, such as improving their content development or language use.

In terms of incorporating source text information, one implication of the current findings is that the path toward eliminating textual misappropriation may be both indirect and lengthy. Shorter but more frequent verbatim copying (as found in the second posttest) may represent a positive step toward more effective and extensive reformulation of source text information for lower proficiency EFL writers. Instructors may find it helpful to encourage low-proficiency L2 writers to reduce the length of copied strings from source texts as a first step in the development of more sophisticated textual appropriation strategies. However, because there is considerable variation across disciplines and instructional settings as to what constitutes ''appropriate'' use of source text information, using even short strings (2–4) may be viewed negatively in some contexts. In such contexts, instructors may need to target the development of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge in tandem with summary writing and paraphrasing skills so that students acquire the linguistic skills needed to perform more extensive reformulations.

While not directly addressed in the present study, it may also be worthwhile to consider phrase-level modification strategies as a possible way to introduce more extensive revisions to source text sentences. Corpus-based descriptions of academic writing (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999) have identified the length of noun phrases as a key characteristic of academic and newspaper writing. More recent corpus-based work has argued that the noun phrase should be considered a measure of syntactic complexity in writing development studies (Biber, Gray, & Poonpon, 2011; Rimmer, 2006). If the path to more extensive reformulation of source texts involves a stage with extensive use of short copied strings, then it might be beneficial to include instruction about noun phrase modifications as a way to bridge between word-level and clausal paraphrasing strategies.

Limitations

In the instructional context reported here, it was not possible to include a control group that received no instruction in summary writing or paraphrasing because these are key components of the required EFL class that all non-English major students must take. Withholding instruction and practice opportunities in the key skills that students must acquire to pass the class would not be ethical. Consequently, it is not possible to conclude that the instruction provided in the students' EFL class was the direct cause of the changes observed in their summary paragraphs. Theoretically, it is possible that students in this context who did not receive instruction could naturalistically acquire summary writing abilities if they needed to write in English for other reasons, such as to complete assignments in their major courses or to carry out their part-time jobs or internships. However, these students have limited opportunities to acquire knowledge of English writing outside the university EFL classroom. Although research designs that include a control group are needed to isolate the impact of instruction as opposed to simple maturation on writing development, such designs may not be appropriate in instructional settings where all students are expected to achieve curricular objectives.

Another potential limitation concerns the attributes of the source text used in the current study, specifically their length and complexity. The source texts were selected to complement the content focus of the students' EFL class textbook and match the style and length of the texts the students typically read in class. As a result, they were simpler and shorter than the source texts more frequently used in academic writing research situated in second language

contexts. It is possible that using even shorter or simpler texts might have helped these EFL students move away from verbatim copies, but this would have impacted the validity of the summary writing task even more negatively because short, simple texts do not require summarization (Yu, 2008, 2009). Conversely, using long and complex source texts would create a more authentic summary writing task, but would likely result in greater verbatim copying due to reading comprehension difficulties.

Concluding remarks

Because summary writing draws upon reading comprehension and writing abilities as well as the linguistic skills needed for paraphrasing, it may not be an appropriate task for lower proficiency L2 writers who have been shown to experience difficulty with source-based writing (Currie, 1998; Howard, 1996; Johns & Mayes, 1990; Shi, 2004). Nevertheless, summary writing is commonly presented in lower-proficiency English L2 writing textbooks that focus on the development of paragraph-level writing (Blanchard & Root, 2010; Reid, 1994) and is a key component of the English class in the Thai university setting reported here. At the time this study was carried out, the English department was evaluating the class content, structure, and materials to identify areas for revision and innovation. A question that arose as part of the revision process was whether the class should continue to include summary writing. Some instructors believed that the ability to summarize texts was a crucial foundational skill for students who write research-based assignments in subsequent, upper-division classes (such as English literature or linguistics). However, because students majoring in other fields are unlikely to write research-based assignments in English, some instructors questioned whether the class should focus more specifically on fostering the students' overall linguistic proficiency and general writing skills.

As an important step, it is important to critically examine whether summary writing is an appropriate task for EFL writers in this context. As described in the introduction, academic writing textbooks designed for L1 and advanced L2 writers more frequently present paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting as techniques for incorporating source information into academic writing tasks. In contrast, writing textbooks for lower-proficiency L2 learners typically present summary writing as a paragraph type that is not integrated into a larger piece of writing. Because previous studies of L2 summary writing by university students in EFL contexts have consistently pointed out challenges with grammar and vocabulary, it raises questions about whether summary writing is an effective method of promoting language and writing development. More globally, the issue of whether to teach summary writing can be understood through reference to the conceptualization of L2 writing as learning-to-write or writing-to-learn (for an overview, see Manchón, 2011). Whereas second language writers typically are developing writing skills in order to become members of a discourse community (learning-to-write), writers in foreign language settings, such as the one reported here, often write in order to practice and learn the target language (Ortega, 2009), or are writing-to-learn. In light of that goal, it is important to consider what writing tasks are appropriate for foreign language writers at various levels of proficiency and to sequence those tasks across the curriculum to maximize target language learning (see Byrnes, 2012 for an example of summary writing in a German foreign language program).

We aim to explore the role of writing in this EFL context in more detail by eliciting instructor and student perceptions about the English writing needs of non-major students at the university. Since these students do not write research-based assignments in English for their content courses and many of them have not identified their future careers with any certainty, they are not learning to write English as part of a broader process of being socialized into a discourse community. As a result, the specific skills associated with summary writing, including the use of source text information, may not be important foundational skills. Reflecting the writing-to-learn orientation, it may be more useful for the students' overall language proficiency to engage in writing tasks that have been designed to promote language development (depth and breadth of vocabulary and mastery of grammatical structures) as well as the ability to deploy such knowledge through writing. In this context, it may be useful to focus on writing tasks that are designed to promote L2 development by engaging cognitive or sociocultural learning mechanisms, which we aim to explore in our future research.

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Appendix A. Overview of the EFL course

Chapter	Topic	Class hours	Focus	Reading texts	Writing activities
1	Introduction to critical reading	6	Identify purpose, mood, tone; differentiate between fact and opinion	Advertisements, narratives, cartoons, reports from *Reader's Digest*	Sentences
2	Introduction to critical thinking	4.5	Recognize categories and sequences, infer	Advertisements, cartoons, reports from *Reader's Digest*	Sentences
3	Styles of writing	9	Making outlines, summary writing	Advertisements, letters	Paraphrasing, summary paragraphs
4	Cultural differences	7.5	Note-taking, compare and contrast writing	Descriptions of holidays	Compare and contrast paragraphs
5	Advertising	9	Analyzing advertisements, mind mapping, cause and effect writing	Advertisements	Cause and effect paragraphs
6	Consumerism	9	Brainstorming, outlining, cause and effect writing	News reports about garbage and recycling	Problem and solution paragraphs

Appendix B. Summary writing source texts

Pretest

Exercise and weight loss

By Reader's Digest Editors

Many dieters believe that exercise helps people lose weight. However, a recent TIME magazine suggests that this belief might be wrong. For some dieters, exercise may make them gain weight.

In order to lose weight, people must burn more calories than they eat. But the harder we work to burn calories, the hungrier we become. Researchers found that dieters eat more than they did before they started exercising. Most people find that exercise makes them hungry, so they eat a snack after their workout. As a result, the benefits of exercising are lost because of the extra calories.

Even though people want to eat healthy food, it's very difficult to control their love for junk food. One study found that willpower is like a muscle. The more often we use it, the weaker it becomes. Forcing yourself to work out and eat healthy may reduce your ability to manage unhealthy eating habits.

Making good food choices is easier than burning calories at a gym. But before you give up your gym membership, remember that regular exercise has physical and mood-lifting benefits. And losing weight is still important.

Posttest1

The Vitamin Myth

By Reader's Digest Editors

Many people believe that taking vitamins is good for their health. However, a recent TIME magazine suggests that this belief might be wrong. For some people, vitamins may be harmful.

People think that vitamins A, B, and C help fight diseases. But a recent study found that taking these vitamins can have negative health effects. Some people increased their risk of dying by up to 16 percent. In addition, many people think that taking vitamin C will prevent colds. However, research shows that taking it daily does not affect common colds.

People can easily buy vitamins at supermarkets and health food stores or online. As a result, they may think that vitamins are natural and safe. But people should be careful if they take other medicines. Some people with heart disease, for example, should not take too much vitamin E.

Making healthy choices is difficult when so many websites advertise the benefits of vitamins. But remember that eating a balanced diet can provide you with all of the vitamins you need. It is always a good idea to ask your doctor for advice about vitamins and nutrition.

Posttest 2

Shopping and Health

By Reader's Digest Editors

Many people believe that shopping is a bad habit. However, a recent TIME magazine suggests that this belief might be wrong. For some people, shopping may help them live longer.

A large study of older men and women found that regular shoppers live longer than less frequent shoppers. Shopping gives people the chance to talk with other people and to get exercise. If shoppers buy fresh food daily, then they may have a healthy diet. Shopping makes people move from one place to another and make decisions. These activities help them stay mentally and physically fit.

Even though people shop for practical reasons, research shows that it's also good for their emotional health. And unlike other types of physical activities, shopping is easy to do. Unlike going to a fitness center or playing sports, people can shop anywhere. As a result, they can do it more regularly.

Shopping for exercise may be easier than going to a gym or playing sports. But remember that too much shopping can lead to problems with money. Making a budget and following it can help everyone avoid over-spending.

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