

# References, Paraphrases and Quotations: Essentials for Writing a Non-plagiarized Text

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## Abstract

This article examines how four students in high school or college choose to integrate sources in their assignments using quotation and paraphrases. Implementing an innovative methodology, a digital screen capture software was used to record all the participants' actions as they wrote a 500-word argumentative essay. A video of each participant's actions was produced. These actions translated as quantitative results and showed the frequency of various actions grouped within five categories of strategies linked to various skills (informational skills, writing skills, referencing skills, basic computer skills and task compliance skills) and a sixth category linked to plagiarism actions. The four texts were also analysed for their quality and their level of plagiarism.

Results show that the college students performed better on overall text quality, but their texts contained more plagiarism. When looking at the strategies used, all students spent more time on their informational and writing strategies than on their referencing strategies. When using sources, in general, participants had more difficulties with paraphrasing than with quoting, often not referencing their paraphrases, which resulted in plagiarism. Patterns emerged for the data showing four types of actions when integrating sources in assignments: the casual integrator, the aspiring integrator, the fearless integrator and the ethical integrator. For each profile, recommendations on how to better develop students' paraphrasing, quoting, and referencing skills are provided.

## Introduction

Students in Quebec first attend primary school and move on to high school from grades 7 to 11. At the end of high school, all students are required to pass a French language test where they must write an argumentative text using sources. After graduating, students can attend CEGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel), a general and professional teaching college, which provides the first level of post-secondary education. In CEGEP, students can choose between two different types of programs: technical or pre-university. There is a wide variety of technical programs offered at CEGEP; for example, nursing, or daycare worker, which are usually three years long. These programs lead to the workforce while the pre-university programs are prerequisite to university (Beaupré-Lavallée & Bégin-Caouette,

2022). These programs can usually be completed in two years. While CEGEP is not mandatory, students must apply to be accepted in a university.

When attending college whether in Quebec or elsewhere, students must complete a variety of literacy tasks irrespective of what program they chose (Wahleithner, 2020). As soon as they start college, “faculty expect students to have an understanding of disciplinary literacy practices” (Armstrong et al., 2015, p. 8). However, students need to be trained on how to write papers in general (Fisher & Frey, 2013), but also in their discipline (Wingate et al., 2011). Being literate these days means more than begin able to read and write (Laidlaw et al., 2021). Students have to know how to surf the web, find information, read, evaluate and analyse it and then be able to choose the relevant information to integrate in their papers (Salmerón et al., 2018), with the added difficulty of quoting, paraphrasing and referencing their sources (Refaei et al., 2017). This article specifically looks at how students choose to integrate their sources in their text and their referencing habits, with an innovative methodology to analyse real-time actions of the participants. This analysis leads to four profiles which show different ways students choose to integrate their sources in their texts.

### Conceptual Framework

Peters (2021), in her ‘Digital Scrapbooking Strategies’ model (see Fig. 1), shows how students use various digital scrapbooking strategies when deploying informational, writing and referencing skills to write their assignments. Digital scrapbooking strategies (DSS) are cognitive actions of processing and execution (Bégin, 2008) used by a writer at all phases of writing, and involve informational, writing and referencing skills.

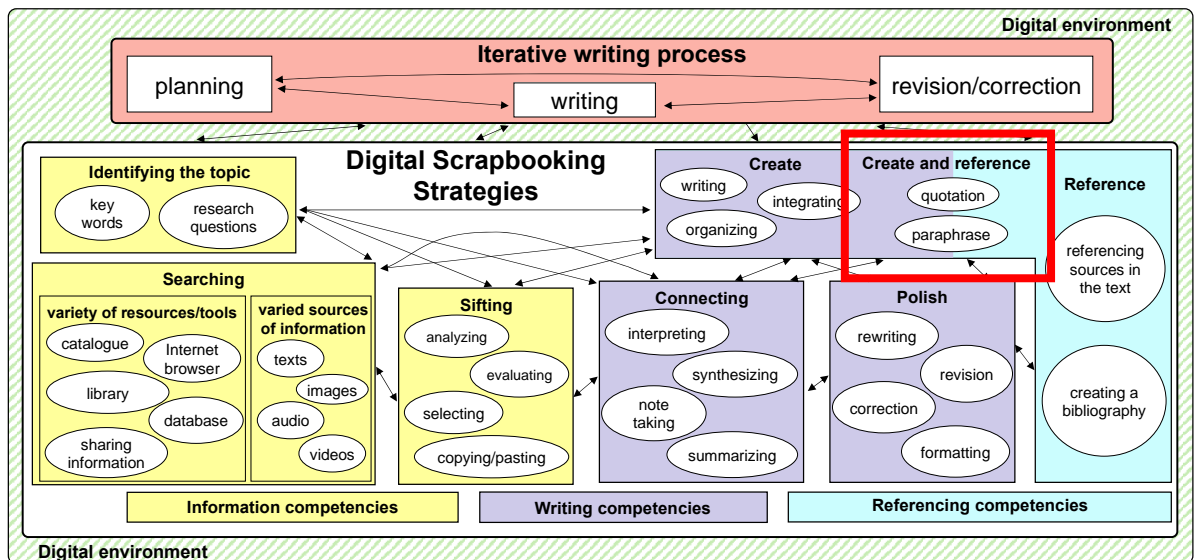


Figure 1. Digital Scrapbooking Strategies Model by Peters (2021), translated into English.

Using DSS to write an assignment is a creative process, much more complex than simply fact finding and copying and pasting in a document. Ryberg (2007) explains that a creative writing process is a constructive and evolutive process, because of the addition of new information throughout the writing. While the use of digital scrapbooking strategies is sometimes difficult to master, two strategies cause problems to students: quoting and paraphrasing.

### Quoting and Paraphrasing

While writing, students can quote or paraphrase another author’s words or ideas into their text. The two strategies are overlapping two skills in the model because they require both writing

and referencing skills when used by students. Students must integrate the new information into their own text with their writing skills and reference the source with the correct norms in the text and in a bibliography or reference list.

When quoting a source, students must use the original authors' exact words which they must put into quotation marks. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, means producing a sentence that is sufficiently transformed from the original authors' words while summarising the main idea, without changing its original meaning (Daunay, 2004; Daunay & Delcambre, 2016). According to Marzec-Stawiarska (2019, p. 116), paraphrasing "requires substantial inferencing and interpreting skills combined with elements of discipline knowledge". Both quotations and paraphrases require that the original source be referenced. Failure to quote or paraphrase properly or to reference the source constitutes plagiarism.

"The ability to effectively incorporate source information into one's work is a complex and essential skill for every academic writer" (Rossi, 2022, p. 411). One major problem students have with quoting and paraphrasing is a lack of understanding of the topic (Howard et al., 2010), making it challenging for two reasons. First, students need to choose the relevant information to paraphrase or quote and this can be difficult when their knowledge of the topic is limited (Regala-Flores & Lopez, 2019). Second, deciding whether to quote or paraphrase is difficult for students (Hyytinen et al., 2017). Research shows that many students do not fully understand the difference between quoting and paraphrasing (Pollet & Piette, 2002), because they are unfamiliar with academic discourse.

Many students, according to researchers, do not know how to quote and paraphrase (Auger, 2013; Mori, 2018). They find paraphrasing complicated (Sun & Yang, 2015); having a limited vocabulary in the discipline can cause them to produce a sentence too similar to the original one (Hayuningrum & Yulia, 2012). Inadequate grammar skills can also hinder some students when paraphrasing (Martinot, 2015). Hutchings (2014) also mentions that students have difficulty using their own voice when writing, which can lead to a tendency to opt for direct quotations instead of taking the time to integrate the information into the text with their own words.

Lack of knowledge about norms (Ellery, 2008; Shi, 2012), and about the ethical boundaries between what needs to be quoted or paraphrased (Auger, 2013) is also a problem for students. Fear of inadvertently plagiarising another author's words also causes anxiety for students (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010).

Many researchers have examined the use of quotations and paraphrases by students in their written work. However, very few researchers have chosen to examine quotations and paraphrases by tracking the real-time evolution of students' writing actions with screen recording software to specifically identify student actions. This is the methodology that was adopted for this research project to identify differences in two digital scrapbooking strategies: quoting and paraphrasing used by high school and college students.

## **Methodology**

In this article, we present data from a multi-case pilot study (Yin, 2018) for a larger project. For this paper, we discuss four individual cases, two males and two females, in two different levels of education. Our research took a comprehensive approach, aiming for an in-depth understanding of the processes involved in the act of writing. We tracked the real-time evolution of the students' actions with screen recording software to specifically identify the different scrapbooking strategies they used while writing to produce the assignment given to them. With the screen recording, we identified reoccurrences of strategies that correspond to the actions observed through their writing process. It is important to note that it was not possible to observe the cognitive strategies taking place in the participant's head, but we could infer these strategies from the participant's actions. These actions translated as quantitative results and showed the frequency of various actions grouped within five categories of strategies linked to various skills (informational skills, writing skills, referencing skills, basic computer skills and task compliance

skills) and a sixth category linked to plagiarism actions. In addition, the texts the participants produced were evaluated and links were made to the strategies that they used. We then qualified each of the four cases according to their dominant characteristics.

Participants were informed of the methodology used when they signed the informed consent form. It is important to emphasise that they were aware that their actions were being recorded when they wrote their text.

### **Participants**

The four participants in this study will be referred to as Abigail, Adam, Brianna and Brandon<sup>1</sup>. They were recruited in two local institutions, through a call to their teachers. A sociodemographic questionnaire was completed by all participants, asking questions including: gender, age, grade, and whether they participated in computer classes (see Table 1). They were also asked to identify any technology devices they owned or that were available to them.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic Information on Participants**

	<b>Abigail</b>	<b>Adam</b>	<b>Brianna</b>	<b>Brandon</b>
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age	16	17	17	18
School year	Grade 11 Last year of high school		1st year CEGEP	
Have you taken computer classes?	No	Yes	No	No
Computer at home	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internet at home	✓	✓	✓	✓
Own a smartphone	✓	✓	✓	✓
Own a tablet	✓	✓	No	No
Hours per day of computer use	1-2 hours	Less than one hour	1-2 hours	1-2 hours

Adam was the only participant who had ever taken computer classes. Both Brianna and Brandon were in their first year of CEGEP (first year of college after high school). All four students had a smartphone, a computer and internet connection at home. Abigail and Adam also had access to a tablet. Three participants, Abigail, Brianna and Brandon, spent one to two hours a day using a computer while Adam used a computer for less than an hour a day.

### **Instruments**

#### **Writing Task**

All participants were asked to write a 500-word essay, to match the characteristics of the type of text required of everyone's grade level (Secondary 5 and CEGEP). Using a computer supplied by the researchers, students completed the writing task with permission to use any software they wanted. Each computer had all necessary software including text processor, dictionaries, spell checkers, etc., and access to the internet. Participants wrote their essays in a classroom, alone, without the possibility of consulting peers. The task was created to replicate the standardised writing exam in Quebec at the end of High School since all participants were familiar with this type of text. Computer use is not currently permitted for the ministry exam, but evaluation to a digital version is underway (Grégoire, 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> These names are fictitious to protect the identity of the participants.

Students were asked to produce an argumentative essay that would show the vision of young people. The exact instruction is translated (from French to English) below:

In your text, it is important that you seek to:

- Express the vision of young Quebecers.
- Pique curiosity or provoke reflection in the reader.
- Obey the principles of intellectual property.
- Make use of reliable data and information.
- Avoid misleading, slanderous, or potentially reprehensible personal or organisational reputations.
- Use a standard language level.

The high school students were given the following prompt for their essay: “Do influencers globally have a positive social influence?” Three articles with varied information were provided for the participants, making seeking for additional information online optional for these participants. This methodological choice was retained to align with the end of high school exam.

The CEGEP participants had a slightly different writing task since they had already completed one year of college, and the single CEGEP writing test is carried out without reference texts provided, which meant that the CEGEP students needed to look up their own information. Their task required them to choose between one of three suggested topics. Their choices were 1) legalisation of marijuana, 2) sexual education courses, and 3) cell phone use in the classroom.

### *Video Screen Capture*

The technology used to enable digital screen capturing in this study was *Open Broadcaster Software* (OBS). This software is free and open-source and compatible with both Mac and PC. For this study, screen capturing of participants as they are writing, and the actions done on the screen were recorded.

The objective of this type of data collection was to examine the writing process by trying “to find out how writers develop their texts and what kind of strategies, i.e. planning, retrieving, reviewing, monitoring and revising, they employ while composing” (Latif, 2008, p. 30). Research has shown that video screen capture can generate data on students’ actions without impairing their natural process (Hamel et al., 2015) and offer better results than a keystroke replay (Park & Kinginger, 2010). Berdanier and Trellinger (2017) specify that the cognitive writing processes that are captured are traces of what is going on in the participant’s mind. However, the authors also say that researchers must be careful from “over-inferring cognitive processes from what is enacted on the computer screen through the writing data” (Berdanier & Trellinger, 2017, p. 3). We therefore associated actions with strategies, without knowing specifically whether these strategies were called upon intentionally or not.

### **Procedure**

For data collection, the four participants wrote their text at the same time, on the type of laptop computer of their choice (Windows or Mac). Each computer was equipped with the necessary applications for the required tasks, including Internet browsers, proofreaders and dictionaries, text capture tools, among others. Once the participants were ready, the OBS software was launched, and the writing task was underway. At the end of the writing period, the four participants completed the sociodemographic questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

Two categories of data were analysed. For the first category, we analysed the texts in three different ways: 1) quality assessment of the text, 2) documentation of the writing strategies and 3) evaluation of the level of plagiarism. The second category of data was to analyse the actions of the participants on video.

### ***Text Quality Evaluation Rubric***

There are no universal criteria for defining text quality (Elliot, 2005). Nevertheless, quality texts will tend to be more developed textually (Graham & Perin, 2007; Limpo & Alves, 2013) and syntactically (Saddler et al., 2008). This will also have an impact on spelling (Troia et al., 2010). Skilled writers will use the necessary strategies to improve the form and content of the text (Alamargot & Morin, 2019). Skilled writers will therefore tend, proportionally, to use more time for planning and revision (Kellogg, 2008). In this research project, given our objectives, three analyses were carried out on the texts to assess their quality, document the writing strategies and evaluate the level of plagiarism.

The evaluation rubric used to score the participants' written productions was the one used for the high school certification test of the Quebec Ministry of Education. An experienced high school teacher assessed the participants' texts. The rubric includes five criteria using the following weightings:

1. Adaptation to the communication situation (30%)
2. Text coherence (20%)
3. Use of appropriate vocabulary (5%)
4. Construction of sentences and appropriate punctuation (25%)
5. Common spelling and grammatical spelling (20%)

Each criterion is evaluated on five levels:

- A: Demonstration of marked competence
- B: Demonstration of competence
- C: Demonstration of acceptable proficiency
- D: Demonstration of poor competence
- E: Demonstration of very low competence

The second dimension that was evaluated within the texts examined whether the participants, when using word processor software, corrected the mistakes signaled by the software with red underlining. At the end of the task, the number of mistakes signaled but not corrected by the participants were noted as part of the evaluation.

Thirdly, to determine the level of similarity content in the texts written by the participants, all four texts were put through a text matching software tool (Compilatio). The software provides an estimate of the level of similarities, based on the percentage of the text that is similar to what can be found on the web or in the software's database. The similarity content of all four texts was checked by the researchers to make sure that the similarities were indeed plagiarised texts and not legitimate matches.

### ***Video Analysis***

The data analysis was done in stages, in a sequential spiral of data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, over a period of several weeks, each video was watched twice by a researcher. Then, using an Excel table, each of the participant's actions was described in depth with the associated time (in minutes and seconds). This step was repeated 3 times for all 4 participants. Using the list of various actions, each action was categorised into one of the following six categories of strategies or actions: informational skills strategies, writing skills strategies, referencing skills strategies, basic computer skills strategies, plagiarism actions and task compliance strategies (see Table 2). Each category was associated with a color - thus conveying a pictorial representation of the actions taken by the participant. To ensure the accuracy of the proposed actions and categories, a cross-coding analysis was performed on 25% of the data. The results were very similar between the two researchers (79,3 Kappa agreement).

**Table 2. Student Actions During Screen Recording**

<b>Informational skills strategies</b>	<b>Writing skills strategies</b>
Choose a search engine	Note taking
Choose keywords	Read and copy and paste
To question	Plan your text
Delimit the subject	Sort
Evaluate a list of results	Write
Analyse a website	Write with source
Read a website	Arrange your text
To select	To integrate
Copy paste	Revision
Watch a video	Correction
To locate information within a web page	Check in an e-dictionary
E-dictionary consultation	Paraphrase with source
<b>Basic computer skills strategies</b>	Borrow
Open a word processing document	Quote
Divide your screen	Hybridise
Get in shape	Evocation
Change window	<b>Plagiarism actions</b>
<b>Referencing skills strategies</b>	Paraphrase without source
Keep track of its sources	Error in the reference
Quote sources in the text	Quote without source and without quotation marks
Refer to the bottom of the page	<b>Task compliance strategies</b>
Reference in bibliography	Read instructions
Replace a source	Analyse the task
	Calculate the words

For the next stage, the times recorded for each action were then calculated using the relevant tools in Excel. Sums and percentages for all participants were then calculated to show the time spent in each of the action categories.

To examine paraphrases and quotations, from the actions in Table 2, a corpus of sentences was created. By looking at specific categories (i.e. writing skills, referencing skills and plagiarism actions), the sentences that were included into the participants' text using information from an online source were easily identifiable. A corpus of quoted, paraphrased, and plagiarised passages was then developed for each participant. The identified sentences were described with the actions associated with them before, during, and after to try and identify patterns in the students' actions.

All the participants' sentences were separated into two categories: copying words (quotation) and rewording (paraphrase). To qualify as either a quotation or a paraphrase, the sentences had to meet specific elements. Quotations were strings of five or more words from a source text (copying words) while paraphrases were a source text reworded by the participant. For quotations and paraphrases not to be plagiarised, all the criteria in Table 3 need to be present for either a quotation or a paraphrase.

**Table 3: Criteria Used to Determine if Quotations or Paraphrases were Plagiarized**

<b>Quotation</b>	<b>Paraphrase</b>
1. Presence of in-text referencing and full reference is listed at the end	1. Presence of in-text referencing and full reference is listed at the end
2. In-text reference includes name of the author and the year of publication	2. Reference includes name of the author and the year of publication
3. In-text reference includes page numbers	3. Sufficiently transformed from the original
4. In-text reference includes quotation marks	4. Summary of the idea without changing its original meaning
	5. Demonstrate dialogue between authorial voice and the source text

For a quotation not to be considered plagiarism, it had to have been referenced in the text, next to the quotation and in the bibliography at the end of the text. The in-text reference had to include from the original source, the name of the author, the year of publication and the page number. The sentence had to be between quotation marks.

As for a good paraphrase, like the quotation, it needed to be referenced in-text and in bibliography, with the name of the author and the year of publication in the in-text reference. A paraphrase should also have been transformed in the vocabulary and in its syntax while still retaining the original idea (Martinot, 2015). A good paraphrase also needed to show how the student integrated the source material in the text with their own authorial voice (Pollet & Piette, 2002). This was easily seen when the paraphrase flowed with the rest of the text, with the same style rather than seeming like the information had been dropped into the text but did not quite fit in (Shi et al., 2018).

After this classification, a further analysis of all participants' referencing behaviour patterns was done. The sentences were analysed with open coding depending on the different actions they did before, during and after writing a sentence. This led to identifying patterns and a more specific understanding of classification of the sentences into the categories below:

1. Referenced quotations,
2. Referenced paraphrases,
3. Attempted referenced paraphrases,
4. Unreferenced disguised quotations,
5. Unreferenced paraphrases.

Only the first and second categories are not plagiarism.

After coding the remaining sentences into these more specific categories, an analysis was done to pinpoint actions that were similar or different between participants for each type of paraphrase. A sequence of actions was first examined to determine if the student looked at the source text or not while paraphrasing their own sentence, giving a potential insight into why the paraphrase was or not like the original.

A second analysis examined how the student's authorial voice (Allison, 2018) was used when paraphrasing sources, whether the paraphrase included or not the names of the original authors, or if specific information from the source was integrated into their paraphrase. Authorial voice is a way for writers to self-represent themselves in their texts, with first-person references, in order to give "a strong sense of what the writer's views are" (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 8). When paraphrasing, it is a way for the writer to show agreement with the views of the original authors. For this analysis, one component of the Voice Intensity Rating Scale created by Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) was selected: self-identification with the use of pronouns.



## Results

The results will be presented in the following order. First, the general information about the texts is presented. Second is the evaluation of the texts from all four participants, which will be followed by the time spent on each type of skill by the participants. Then, analysis will be presented of the quotations and paraphrases done by the students. Finally, the sequence of actions by participants will be discussed.

### **General Information about the Texts**

The first look at the results showed that there were already differences between the high school and college participants in the number of words produced and the time taken to produce the text (see Table 4).

**Table 4: General Information about the Texts**

	<b>Abigail</b>	<b>Adam</b>	<b>Brianna</b>	<b>Brandon</b>
Number of words	654	636	643	714
Time taken to produce text	1:54:09	2:04:21	2:36:08	2:33:04

Abigail and Adam, the two high school students, produced a similar number of words as Brianna, the female college student. Brandon produced 60 words more than Abigail. As for the time spent on writing the texts, Abigail and Adam both took approximately two hours, but at the end of his task, Adam rushed to finish, leaving only hyperlinks in his text in lieu of references. Brianna and Brandon took a little over two and a half hours to write their texts. This can be explained by the fact that they had to look for their information, while the high school students had information in their task package. Brandon also took approximately 15 minutes at the end of his task, possibly reviewing, but not changing anything to his text, which made it impossible to determine, by the video made of his actions on the computer, which actions he was taking, if any.

### **Text Evaluation for the Four Participants**

As mentioned previously, the evaluation rubric used to score the participants' written work included five criteria. As Table 5 shows, both college students obtained a better overall score on their texts than the high school students, which is hardly surprising since the former have an extra year of schooling.

**Table 5. Five criteria evaluation of participants' text**

	<b>Adam</b>	<b>Abigail</b>	<b>Brianna</b>	<b>Brandon</b>
Conventions of Language (30%)	15	20	24	24
Text coherence (20%)	13	13	16	20
Vocabulary (5%)	2	3	3	2
Construction of sentences and appropriate punctuation (25%)	16	18	20	20
Common spelling and grammatical spelling (20%)	13	12	20	16
Overall total score	59%	66%	83%	82%

Brandon's higher result for text coherence shows that the quality of his text was much better than that of the other three participants, but his scores on the other criteria were very similar to Brianna's except where she did better on the spelling. The two high school students' scores were very similar as well, but consistently lower than the college students' scores.

Two other dimensions were analysed (see Table 6). The first was the number of mistakes (surface-level grammar and punctuation errors) left in the text by the participants even though these were highlighted by the word processing software. The second was the percentage of similarity in their text, according to the Compilatio report (similarity checking software) analysis.

**Table 6: Number of Mistakes Left in Text and Percentage of Similarity in Their Text for the Four Participants**

	Abigail		Adam		Brianna		Brandon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Number of mistakes marked by word processing software not corrected by the participants	10	1.5 %	16	2.5 %	3	0.5 %	1	0.2%
Percentage of similarity (Compilatio)	6%		6 %		13 %		12 %	

The high school students left more unattended mistakes signaled by the word processing software than the college students. Some of the mistakes would have been easy to correct, and Adam had the highest percentage of this type of mistake in his text. As for the level of similarity flagged by software, the college students' texts contained a lot more than the high school students' texts. This might be explained by the fact that the college students had to find their own information while Abigail and Adam had access to information given to them. It is possible that being given information might have alerted the high school students to be careful about plagiarism since the research team would obviously be more aware of the content of the information in the texts provided than if the texts had been found on the web, as in the case of the college students.

#### **Time Spent on Each Type of Skill**

Table 7 shows the time spent on each type of strategy while Table 8 shows the percentage amount of time and the number of actions by the participants as well as the average for all of them.

**Table 7. Time Spent on Each Type of Strategy**

	Adam	Abigail	Brianna	Brandon
Informational strategies	0:21:35	0:52:41	0:51:17	01:02:24
Writing strategies	0:54:54	1:01:15	1:17:12	01:10:01
Referencing strategies *	0:29:44	0:03:30	0:25:01	00:19:20
Level of similarity**	0:07:12	0:18:20	0:01:06	00:27:04
Time spent doing something other than strategies	0:19:18	0:07:30	0:06:51	00:02:25
Total time in strategies	1:53:25	2:15:46	2:36:08	02:58:49
Total	2:05:34	2:04:21	2:36:08	02:37:04

\*sometimes simultaneously with writing strategies

\*\*almost always in sync with writing strategies

Students spent much more time on their informational and writing strategies than on their referencing strategies. Very little time was spent doing something other than working on those

three types of strategies. Approximately two minutes were spent on other actions, such as the use of the technical strategies to open or format a document. Referencing strategies were very rarely done on their own, and were often paired with writing strategies or plagiarism actions, depending on the nature of the action done. For example, if a student was paraphrasing a sentence while referencing it, the double strategy was writing-referencing. If, on the other hand, the paraphrase was written and not referenced, the double strategy was writing-plagiarism.

**Table 8. Percentage Amount of Time, Number of Actions**

	<b>Adam</b>	<b>Abigail</b>	<b>Brianna</b>	<b>Brandon</b>
Informational strategies	17%	42%	33%	40
Writing strategies	44%	49%	49%	45
Referencing strategies *	24%	3%	16%	12
Level of similarity **	6%	15%	1%	17
Time spent doing something other than strategies	15%	6%	4%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>106%</b>	<b>115%</b>	<b>103%</b>	<b>116%</b>

\*sometimes simultaneously with writing strategies

\*\*almost always in sync with writing strategies

The numbers in Table 8 show that students concentrated their time and actions much more on the information gathering and the integrating of the information in the writing while little time was devoted to referencing except for Adam.

### ***Participants' Use of Quotations and Paraphrasing***

The analysis revealed a total of 33 quotations and paraphrases included by the participants. In general, participants had more difficulties with paraphrasing than with quoting. If students were able to do in-text referencing, both quotations (#1) and paraphrases (#2) were well done. For the *attempted referenced paraphrases* (#3), they also contained an in-text reference, but the transformations were not sufficient. The paraphrase was too similar to the original sentence although it still accurately and completely represented the author's original idea. There was only one *unreferenced disguised quotation* (#4) where the student quoted the exact sentence but did not use quotation marks. The *unreferenced paraphrases* (#5) plagiarised the original author in all four ways. The paraphrase was not referenced, it was barely transformed from the original, did not accurately represent the author's ideas and did not manage to integrate the paraphrase properly into the text with the student's authorial voice.

Table 9 presents the results grouped by participants. As the numbers indicate, Abigail, Adam and Brianna had similar totals for quotations and paraphrases, while Brandon was in a different category with the largest number of unreferenced paraphrases.

**Table 9. Quotations and paraphrases by participants**

	#1 Referenced quotations	#2 Referenced paraphrases	#3 Attempted referenced paraphrases	#4 Unreferenced disguised quotation	#5 Unreferenced paraphrases	Total
<b>Abigail</b>	1 17%	1 17%	1 17%	0 0%	3 50%	6 100%
<b>Adam</b>	2 29%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 71%	7 100%
<b>Brianna</b>	2 40%	1 20%	2 40%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
<b>Brandon</b>	1 7%	0 0%	1 7%	1 7%	12 80%	15 100%

All the participants used one or two referenced quotations (#1) in their texts, but there was no noticeable difference according to the schooling level of school of the participants. Brandon was the only participant who tried to reference when paraphrasing (#4) but he failed to make it sufficiently different from the source. Brandon was also the only participant who directly plagiarised an author by not giving the reference and not using quotations. Three participants used unreferenced paraphrases. Brianna was the only one who did not plagiarise, by referencing her sources. Unreferenced paraphrases (#5) composed 80% of Brandon's source integration, the highest percentage of all the participants.

**Sequence of actions by the participants**

A few interesting patterns emerged from the sequence of actions by the participants. The patterns were different according to the types of quotations or paraphrases.

*Patterns for the referenced paraphrases (#2)*

The first one occurred when Abigail and Brianna *referenced paraphrases* (#2). These two participants started by reformulating the source sentence and did not look at the original text. Once they were satisfied with the transformation and convinced that the idea was presented accurately, they immediately gave the in-text reference and included it in the bibliography. The reference was well done in all five characteristics of a good paraphrase. For example, Brianna wrote this sentence "Emmanuel Macron and his Minister of Education have even gone so far as to establish a law banning the possession of a cell phone by any student in all schools". After writing the paraphrase, Brianna's first action was to include the URL reference.

*Patterns for the attempted referenced paraphrases (#3)*

For the *attempted referenced paraphrases* (#3), the same pattern emerged as for the *referenced paraphrases* (#2). The reference was given immediately after the writing of the paraphrase. Because the full reference was given, in-text and in bibliography, the participants clearly had the intent to give credit to the author. They also properly presented the original idea within their paraphrases. However, a different pattern emerged with the *attempted referenced paraphrases* (#3), when it came time for the transformation of the text for three of the participants. The students tried to paraphrase, but the sentence was too close to the original sentence. Brianna, in the following attempted referenced paraphrase, gave an almost identical reformulation of the original sentence.

Brianna's text: *In Canada, 73% of the population own a cell phone*<sup>2</sup>.

Original text: "... Canada is at the top of the scale, with 82% of the Canadian population using a cell phone: 73% of the population own smartphones and 78% own laptops or desktops" (Kap Numérique, 2017).

When looking at the actions during the writing of the paraphrase, it was possible to see that these participants were looking at the original text immediately before and during the writing of the paraphrase which might explain why the paraphrase was so similar to the original. Another possible consequence of looking at the original text while paraphrasing was that the students did not use their authorial voice when writing the *attempted referenced paraphrases* (#3).

#### *Patterns for the unreferenced disguised quotation (#4)*

There was only one *unreferenced disguised quotation* (#4), but the pattern that was observed is so interesting that it is worth mentioning. In this case, Brandon spent time trying to write a paraphrase before going back to the website to copy the original sentence and paste it in his assignment, disguising the quotation slightly.

Brandon's text: *Indeed, a marijuana joint contains 50% more tar than a cigarette.*

Original text: "A cannabis joint contains up to 50% more tar than a popular brand cigarette" (Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de Chaudière-Appalache, 2023).

Basically, Brandon added a sentence connector (*Indeed*) and substituted "marijuana" for "cannabis". Finding synonyms or transforming the sentence seemed too difficult. What this pattern seems to indicate is that Brandon felt he could not sufficiently transform the original sentence or formulate it using his own authorial voice and so gave up trying and decided to simply disguise the quotation and not reference it. It is worth mentioning that at no time during the writing task did Brandon reference any of his paraphrases.

#### *Patterns for the unreferenced paraphrases (#5)*

All of the 20 *unreferenced paraphrases* (#5) were written by three of the four participants. Brianna was the exception, but another pattern emerged from the data. All of these paraphrases are considered plagiarism because there was no in-text-citation. Some participants did give the source in the bibliography. Only three of the 20 paraphrases did not represent the original idea accurately. The difference with the 17 other *unreferenced paraphrases* (#5) was in the use of the authorial voice. While writing these paraphrases, the three participants oversimplified the original sentences, and gave examples or their own observations, in essence, making the original sentence their own, showing their agreement with the author, yet not referencing the author.

For example, one participant wrote: "*Since it's us, the Internet users, who choose the people we want to follow on social networks, these are people we identify with more than others*". The student clearly identified with the results from research reporting on adolescent and young adults' habits regarding whom they choose to follow on social media, but the original research was not referenced in the student's text. When doing these actions, the participants kept the author's basic idea to show that they agreed with it, yet at the same time personalised the paraphrase with their own information. In essence, they are making the paraphrases theirs, which is why they don't feel the need to reference the original idea.

The patterns presented are interesting because they show how students can sequence their actions to produce appropriate paraphrases or slide into plagiarism with different habits. Next, we will present profiles of students and recommendations to help the students recognise when their actions could lead to plagiarism.

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<sup>2</sup> All participants' quotations from their written texts and the source sentences have been translated from French to English.

## Discussion

This first section of the discussion contextualised the results by looking at how students are prepared for the language ministry exam at the end of high school in Quebec. The writing task for this research project mirrored the ministry exam, in order for the students to feel comfortable and knowledgeable about the task's expectations. Turner (2009), in her research, has shown that many teachers “teach to the test” to prepare their students, during their last year of high school, for the ministry exam.

Ministry documents (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2022) for this exam specify that students do not need to reference a source for a justification, or an argument based on general or approximate figures, beliefs, values, accepted facts, sayings, proverbs, famous phrases, etc. Dates and times are not considered facts, so again the source is optional. Finally, all pieces of information that are neither figures nor quotations (restatement, synthesis, etc.) do not need to be referenced. Expectations for referencing are minimal: only one important element is required, the name of the author, the title of the article or the name of the journal. A URL is considered a complete source (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2021-2022) yet, it is a difficult string of letters to copy without making a mistake (students must handwrite this exam).

This explains why very little time is spent on referencing in the students' writing tasks. The two high school students have probably never been required to give complete references. Holschuh (2019) explains that often, the types of academic literacy tasks that are expected from students exceed what they have learned before they enter college and require both scaffolded experiences and continued support from educators. As for the two college students, only Brianna seems to have learned referencing during her first year of college. She is the only participant who seems to place any importance on referencing. Valenza et al. (2022), in their research, also found that for students, researching and integrating information in their assignments, is more complex in college than it was in high school. Learning about referencing should not start in college but should be done all the way through high school.

However, it is important to note that if the participants' texts had been written for a ministry exam, they would have all passed it, showing a good level of language proficiency. This is also indicated by the fact that they all chose to paraphrase more often than they quote, exhibiting a high level of writing proficiency (Keck, 2014). However, “paraphrasing is a step towards writing mastery, but the students still struggle with how to use their sources” (Hyytinen et al., 2017, p. 425) and how to reference them (Gravett & Kinchin, 2018).

The following section presents four profiles, which sort the actions of the participants according to the results they obtained from the writing task.

### **Profile level 1: Adam – Casual Integrator**

Adam has very little plagiarism in his text. He used two quotations which he referenced accurately, clearly demonstrating that he has learned some aspects of how to integrate and reference sources in high school. However, of the four participants, he wrote the fewest number of words and has the lowest evaluation on his text (59%). He had problems with all aspects of writing, as is evidenced by the largest number of mistakes highlighted by the word processor that he left in his text. His linguistic difficulties could explain why Adam wrote five *unreferenced paraphrases*. His evaluation shows that he had difficulties with vocabulary and with text coherence. This might explain why he sometimes simplified the original sentences, adding his own information. This, however, two times out of five, caused him to change the original idea of the author. Adam was very casual in his integration of other authors' information in his text. He did spend a lot of time trying to reference but was not always successful.

To teach students who have the same profile as Adam plagiarism prevention in their texts, teachers should:

- a) systematically teach students the five elements included in a reference.

- b) train students on text coherence, showing them how to integrate their own voice in their paraphrases yet retain the original idea.

**Profile 2: Abigail – Aspiring Integrator**

Abigail was a little more successful than Adam when writing and referencing her paraphrases. She had left fewer mistakes in her text that were highlighted by the word processing software. Abigail referenced half of the quotations and paraphrases she included in her text. She aspired to properly integrate information in her text to conform to expectations but still lacked the linguistic and procedural knowledge to do so. Abigail adopted a good paraphrasing strategy, not looking at the source sentence to produce a good paraphrase. But for another paraphrase, she looked at the original sentence and ended up writing a plagiarised paraphrase, referenced but too similar to the source.

And so, students with a profile like Abigail need to be taught two ways to paraphrase:

- a) how to modify a paraphrase sufficiently from the original, with synonyms, but also with syntax.
- b) how to read a sentence, put it aside, and try to explain the idea with completely new words.

**Profile 3 Brandon – Fearless Integrator**

Brandon was the student who performed the best when it came to text coherence. He also wrote the longest text and left the least number of mistakes highlighted by the word processor. He was flagged by the software detector as having 12% similarity in his text. However, after looking closely at the paraphrases and quotations that Brandon used, 93% of those were plagiarism. None of the paraphrases written by this participant were referenced in the text. However, Brandon did produce a bibliography where he gave his sources, but these did not refer specifically to any ideas he used in his text.

Brandon showed a high ability to integrate other authors' information in his text with his paraphrases, demonstrating what Alvi et al. (2021) called re-creation and not simple retelling. He was able to use his authorial voice to blend his voice with those of other authors (Hutchings, 2014). Unfortunately, Brandon seemed to think that using his own voice to present someone else's idea meant that the information becomes his. He was fearless of plagiarising, possibly because he was not sure what constitutes good referencing (Mbutho & Hutchings, 2021).

Having said all this, it's ironic that Brandon, who paraphrased quite well, was also the only participant who wrote an *unreferenced disguised quotation*. He did produce a good quotation which indicates that he knew that other authors' words need to be put in quotation marks. He gave up trying to paraphrase the sentence and copied and pasted it in his text. According to Hayuningrum and Yulia (2012), students sometimes end up copying and pasting the original sentence when they are faced with a difficult sentence to paraphrase.

Fearless integrators need to be taught:

- a) the advantages of quoting versus paraphrasing and vice-versa.
- b) that a paraphrase is the representation of another person's idea and must always be referenced.
- c) how to reference in-text, immediately after they paraphrase another person's ideas (Vieyra & Weaver, 2016).

**Profile 4 Brianna – Ethical Integrator**

Brianna's score on the text was the highest though she did have a lower score on text coherence than Brandon. Her text did not contain many mistakes, scoring a 20/20 for spelling. This indicates an attention to detail, typical in a high achiever. This is reflected in her consistent, safe and ethical use of sources. Every single bit of information she used for sources was referenced. She was the only participant who knew that paraphrases - not just quotations - must always be referenced.

Of the four participants, Brianna used the lowest number of quotations and paraphrases, producing the second shortest text. Her biggest difficulty was with the *attempted referenced paraphrases* when she produced paraphrases that were too close to the original source. Brianna seemed to have difficulty demonstrating agreement with the authors' original ideas, struggling to use sources to justify her own position (Hyytinen et al., 2017; Ivanič & Camps, 2001). She could not clearly express her position, with her own words and voice in 50% of her paraphrases. While this was plagiarism, it was clearly unintentional because she included her sources. Guerin and Picard (2012) express it very vividly:

Thus, it is a process of learning to distinguish between the elements of writing that are available for recycling and those which are not - which items of clothing are available from the second-hand rack, and those which must remain in the wardrobes of their original owners (Guerin & Picard, 2012, p. 42).

The ethical integrators like Brianna need to learn:

- a) to be a little fearless and integrate more sources in their texts.
- b) to use their own words when paraphrasing yet keep the original idea of the source.
- c) to bring forth their voice so that their texts are more coherent, and their position is clearly established in their texts.

## Conclusion

The objective here was not to point out plagiarist behavior, but to highlight how important it is for students to develop good informational, writing and referencing strategies all the way through high school and college.

Students should be taught:

- when and why they need to reference the sources they use.
- that an author's idea is not theirs and must be referenced in the text and in bibliography.
- to **always** reference immediately after text source use so as not to forget to do it later.
- to distance themselves from the original text.
- to use their authorial voice by demonstrating agreement with the author's original idea while referencing it.

Students must understand first and foremost that just like an author's words, the author's ideas are not theirs – and both must be referenced in the text.

Teaching strategies for each stage of the writing process is one of the best ways to significantly develop students' writing skills and reduce plagiarism (Peters & Cadieux, 2019). It is also true for quotation (Vardi, 2012) and paraphrase strategies (Setsuko et al., 2007), which cannot be acquired without explicit teaching (Ardelia & Tiyas, 2019). But teachers need to be trained to know what to teach, and adjust it to the writing context, to the genre and discipline being studied, and above all to the learners and their characteristics.



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