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**English Teachers' Perspectives
on the Role of Paraphrasing
in Swedish Upper Secondary School
Preparatory Programmes**

*Engelsklärares Perspektiv på Parafraseringens Roll
i Gymnasieförberedande Program i Sverige*

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Abstract

This study investigates how English teachers in Swedish upper secondary school preparatory programmes perceive the role and importance of paraphrasing in reading comprehension and academic writing, and how their views align with Swedish steering documents for English. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six teachers, and the data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings show that participants view paraphrasing as a key academic literacy skill. It was described as a “benchmark” for reading comprehension and a “cornerstone” of academic writing, supporting students’ understanding, language development, and ethical source use. However, participants perceive paraphrasing as underspecified in the steering documents, since the term is not explicitly stated and guidance remains implicit. As a result, paraphrasing instruction was reported to depend on participants’ professional judgement and individual priorities, which may contribute to variation in classroom practice. Teachers also highlighted that the rise of AI-based tools has made paraphrasing both more difficult to assess and more important to teach, leading to increased focus on controlled in-class tasks and process-oriented assessment. Overall, the findings suggest a need for clearer curricular support for paraphrasing, earlier and sustained instruction, and stronger professional resources to promote consistent teaching and assessment across schools.

Keywords: English teachers, paraphrasing, reading comprehension, academic writing, curriculum, policy documents, upper secondary education

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Introduction

In many Nordic and Northern European educational contexts, English occupies a unique position that extends beyond a traditional foreign language. Countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands share a similar linguistic environment in which high societal proficiency in English is common. Due to extensive extramural exposure through media and digital culture, students in these regions often acquire substantial fluency before formal advanced instruction begins (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). As a result, upper secondary education in these systems faces a specific challenge: moving students from conversational fluency to the academic literacy required for university studies. Although these nations operate under different national curricula, they share the common goal of aligning language education with international frameworks, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001).

Within this broader regional landscape, Sweden offers a distinct example of how policy shapes instruction. Following the school reforms of 1962, English became a core subject available to all students rather than a privilege reserved for an academic elite (Cabau Lampa, 1999; Malmberg, 1985). Today, Swedish syllabi are broadly aligned with CEFR, and upper secondary English courses are commonly discussed in relation to proficiency levels ranging from B1 to C1 (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). Within this framework, upper secondary education plays an important role in preparing students for the academic language demands of higher education.

In this context, upper secondary school preparatory programmes constitute a central component of the Swedish education system because they are explicitly designed to prepare students for university-level studies, as outlined in steering documents issued by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), hereafter referred to as Skolverket (Skolverket, 2024). Expectations within these programmes include students' development of academic knowledge, language proficiency, and learning strategies necessary to meet the intellectual and communicative demands of higher education (Skolverket, 2024). This transition from upper secondary school to university involves increased requirements for academic reading and writing, as well as higher expectations of independent academic work; consequently, the quality and focus of instruction in preparatory programmes play an important part in students' preparedness for further studies (Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021; Coffin et al., 2003).

In higher education, students are expected to read academic texts and demonstrate comprehension through written assignments, projects, and research-based papers (Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021; Hirvela, 2004). Across disciplines, English functions as the dominant

language of academic communication, which places additional demands on students in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language (Altbach, 2007). Consequently, academic success depends both on general language proficiency and students' ability to master academic literacy practices, particularly advanced reading comprehension and academic writing (Hirvela & Du, 2013). These skills are not automatically acquired; instead, they are developed through explicit instruction and guided practice (Coffin et al., 2003).

Integrating source material into a text in a meaningful and ethical manner is one of the major challenges in academic writing and requires both skill and language proficiency (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Pecorari, 2003). It is therefore a process that depends on strategies enabling students to interpret, evaluate, and reformulate ideas from academic sources while maintaining accuracy and coherence (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Keck, 2006). One such strategy is paraphrasing. Paraphrasing has been described as an indicator of deeper textual understanding rather than superficial language practice (Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003). It enables students to demonstrate comprehension by restating ideas in their own words, thereby functioning as a cognitive bridge between reading and writing. Besides its linguistic dimension, paraphrasing is closely linked to the development of critical thinking, academic integrity, and appropriate source use, making it a fundamental component of academic literacy (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Pecorari, 2003).

Considering the function of upper secondary preparatory programmes, students could be expected to encounter paraphrasing as a learning and writing strategy before entering higher education (Skolverket, 2024). However, in Sweden, the extent to which paraphrasing is explicitly addressed in upper secondary education is influenced by national steering documents, including curricula and syllabi issued by Skolverket (Skolverket, 2024). These documents outline the aims, core content, and grading criteria for English education, while still allowing teachers considerable professional autonomy in interpreting and implementing instructional practices (Jeppsson, 2023; Skolverket, 2024). As a result, teaching strategies such as paraphrasing may remain indirectly expressed and therefore unevenly prioritised across schools and classrooms (Alsäter, 2021; Jeppsson, 2023).

Because Gy25 allows for professional interpretation, how paraphrasing is taught may depend both on policy and teachers' individual approaches to instruction (Skolverket, 2024). Teachers' beliefs play a central role in balancing curriculum expectations and classroom practice (Borg, 2006). In the Swedish context, research similarly suggests that teachers' interpretations of curricular goals and their professional autonomy may contribute to variation

in how instructional strategies are enacted (Alsäter, 2021; Jeppsson, 2023). This autonomy has been described as relatively high for Swedish teachers since the 1990s (Wolcott, 2023). Teachers' understandings of language learning, academic literacy, and the purpose of specific strategies may therefore shape how reading and writing are approached. In the case of paraphrasing, teachers' perceptions of its value—whether as a comprehension strategy, a writing skill, or a safety tool for supporting academic integrity—may influence both instructional emphasis and assessment practices (Borg, 2006). Examining teachers' perspectives is therefore essential for understanding how paraphrasing is positioned within English instruction in preparatory programmes and how curricular intentions are interpreted and enacted in practice (Borg, 2006; Hirvela & Du, 2013).

Teaching paraphrasing has also become more challenging with the recent developments in AI-based writing tools. These tools can automatically rephrase text, which may complicate traditional understandings of paraphrasing as a student-generated process that reflects comprehension and cognitive engagement (Marzuki et al., 2023). Within English education, this raises questions about academic integrity, assessment validity, and the continued importance of teaching manual paraphrasing (Fitria, 2024). Teachers may therefore be expected to mediate the relationship between technological innovation and curricular aims, while remaining aligned with the objectives and requirements in Swedish steering documents (Skolverket, 2024).

Accordingly, the present study explores English teachers' perspectives on the importance of teaching paraphrasing in Swedish upper secondary school preparatory programmes. It examines how English teachers perceive the role and importance of paraphrasing in reading comprehension and academic writing instruction, the extent to which these perspectives and practices align with Swedish steering documents, and how teachers respond to AI-based tools in paraphrasing instruction and assessment. By focusing on teachers' perspectives, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how academic literacy strategies are conceptualised and implemented within preparatory programmes, and how curriculum policy, teacher cognition, and classroom practice interact in preparing students for higher education.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the study is to provide insights that may inform pedagogical practices, curriculum design, and policy developments that support the systematic implementation of paraphrasing as an instructional strategy to enhance students' cognitive skills and academic literacy. The following research questions guide the present study:

1. How do English teachers in Swedish upper secondary school preparatory programmes perceive the role and importance of paraphrasing in reading comprehension and academic writing lessons?
2. To what extent do these teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning of paraphrasing align with Swedish steering documents for English education in upper secondary school preparatory programmes?
3. How do English teachers perceive and respond to the impact of AI-based tools on their instruction and assessment practices related to paraphrasing?

Literature Review

The literature review moves from general academic literacy research to paraphrasing and then to policy, teachers' perspectives and AI. Research on reading comprehension and academic writing highlights paraphrasing as a beneficial strategy because it supports language development, fosters critical thinking and helps students avoid plagiarism when using sources to develop their ideas. However, learning to teach and apply this strategy requires considerable pedagogical effort. Consequently, English teachers play a central role in equipping their students with effective paraphrasing skills. Teachers, therefore, serve as key agents in encouraging students to apply this strategy when reading, writing, and referring to original sources. Instructional approaches and perspectives on paraphrasing within English lessons are thus highly significant. The curriculum is another crucial factor influencing the implementation of paraphrasing, as it serves as the primary reference point that guides teachers in determining what to teach, why to teach it, and how to teach it.

The Interconnection Between Reading and Writing

The Role of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is essential for academic success and necessary for effective paraphrasing and source-based writing. It is a crucial receptive skill for university students and is widely recognised as fundamental in academic literature (Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021; Hirvela, 2004). This importance stems from the expectation that students must frequently engage with, understand, infer, and interpret scientific texts and discipline-related papers to acquire relevant knowledge (Coffin et al., 2003). Structurally, reading comprehension involves a complex cognitive process that includes understanding written content, analysing ideas and their interrelationships, identifying an author's intent and overall argument, and critically reflecting on the material to form informed and original perspectives (Hirvela, 2004).

Moreover, academic reading plays a significant role in skill development by enabling students to approach content from multiple perspectives, participate in academic discussions, and acquire the means to communicate disciplinary knowledge—practices that are central to academic communities (Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021). Reading comprehension has also long been examined as a metacognitive skill that involves awareness of one's own reading processes. A student's ability to understand a text depends on several factors, including vocabulary knowledge, effective reading strategies, motivation, and the ability to regulate one's own learning (Escudero et al., 2019).

The Role of Academic Writing

At university, students are required to submit written assignments and papers across many courses. To complete these tasks successfully, they must possess well-developed academic writing skills. These skills include writing fluently and coherently, evaluating and commenting on one's own work, defending arguments, expressing cause-and-effect relationships clearly, and maintaining logical structure within a text. In addition, students must master discipline-specific terminology and apply it appropriately in writing while ethically and accurately quoting and referencing the work of other scholars (Hirvela & Du, 2013).

Reading and Writing: Complementary Components in Education

Reading and writing are fundamentally complementary components of academic practice. For a text to be read, it must first be written, and for students to produce effective written texts, engagement with previously written material is essential. In educational contexts, this creates a dual task for students: they must critically read and evaluate the works of others while also transforming acquired information into written assignments intended for new audiences.

Research on the relationship between reading and writing suggests that literacy development is enhanced when reading and writing are taught together and when instruction makes their connections explicit. Shanahan (1988) integrates this connection into seven instructional principles, including teaching reading and writing together, emphasizing shared but not identical knowledge backgrounds, and engaging learners in meaningful communication using authentic texts. These principles justify approaching paraphrasing as a reading-to-writing practice, as it requires students to comprehend source content and then accurately rephrase meaning in writing, rather than merely reproduce wording. This reciprocal relationship is also noted by Grabe and Kaplan (1996, as cited in Hirvela, 2004), who state that "reading and writing are reciprocal activities; the outcome of a reading activity can serve as input for writing, and writing can lead a student to further reading resources" (p. 297).

Building on this view, later research has specified how this reciprocal relationship operates in academic settings, particularly through students' engagement with source texts. According to Hirvela and Du (2013), "a key element in academic writing instruction is developing in students the ability to use source texts. This involves important connections between reading and writing: reading sources effectively to identify the most useful information for writing purposes, and knowing how, in the act of writing, to successfully incorporate that material into the text being created" (p. 87).

Taken together, prior research positions reading and writing as interdependent academic practices rather than isolated skills. Within this reading-to-write process, students are required both to comprehend source texts and to reinterpret and rearticulate information for new communicative purposes. One of the central challenges in this process is how meaning is transformed from source texts into students' own written language. Therefore, paraphrasing emerges as a beneficial strategy that links comprehension, knowledge construction, and written production.

Paraphrasing as a Core Academic and Learning Strategy

Paraphrasing as a Reading Strategy

Numerous studies highlight the importance of paraphrasing as a skill that students need to acquire when reading genre-specific scientific and academic texts. Research suggests that effective reading comprehension—including understanding main ideas, details, vocabulary, and making inferences and critical judgements—requires students to engage with texts using strategies such as paraphrasing, which support vocabulary development, grammatical awareness, and higher-level inferential and critical reading skills (Escudero et al., 2019).

Paraphrasing has also been identified as “an integral tool” for overcoming reading comprehension difficulties and as an active learning technique that facilitates the transition from basic to deeper understanding, supporting long-term memory retention (Hungwe, 2019, p. 2). The implementation of paraphrasing in reading lessons has been shown to promote productive language practices, such as lexical substitution, sentence restructuring, and meaning reformulation, thereby supporting deeper comprehension of source texts (Nirwana, 2020).

Paraphrasing as a Writing Tool

Paraphrasing is often described as more than a language technique because it requires deep comprehension and critical engagement with meaning. Effective paraphrasing involves interpreting meaning accurately, maintaining positional equivalence, and distinguishing clearly between the writer's voice and the source voice (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2019; Shi, 2012). It is therefore viewed as a strategy that demands both critical thinking and deep understanding (Tran, 2024).

Similarly, paraphrasing is emphasised as “an important skill in academic writing” that requires a strong command of thinking and language ability, particularly at university level where most written assignments are source-based (Chi & Nguyen, 2017). It is also defined as a “crucial strategy” that assists students in integrating external sources into their own

academic work—a task often described as challenging because it requires restating ideas from original texts using new language while preserving the author’s intended message (Clarín et al., 2023). These statements support paraphrasing as an essential tool for plagiarism prevention and for the development of academic writing proficiency.

Although paraphrasing is considered an effective and useful strategy in reading comprehension and academic writing, it is also framed as a complex academic literacy skill that requires more than linguistic rewording (Hyytinen et al., 2017). It is described as a cognitively demanding practice with recurring difficulties, such as copying, patchwriting, and inaccurate reformulation, which suggests that problematic source use may reflect developmental challenges. Therefore, from an academic literacy perspective, paraphrasing is closely tied to students’ socialisation into academic discourse, supporting the need for explicit instruction and guided practice in source-based writing.

Research further shows that instructed students value source information more highly, invest more effort in text processing, and attribute content to source more frequently (Bråten et al., 2019). This suggests that source-based academic skills can be strengthened through structured teaching and practice—a point highly relevant to paraphrasing, which is a closely related strategy for integrating information responsibly in student writing.

Overall, paraphrasing functions as a central strategy that connects reading and writing skills. It serves as a dual-purpose pedagogical tool by enabling teachers to clarify complex content and supporting students in comprehending, reformulating and ethically incorporating source material into their own writing. Existing literature not only supports paraphrasing as a pedagogically valuable strategy but also suggests that its successful implementation needs explicit instruction, continued practice and careful assessment. Therefore, consistency within curricula and sufficient instructional support for teachers are essential to ensuring its effective use.

Why Paraphrasing Matters

Research on source-based writing shows that what appears to be plagiarism is not always deliberate cheating, especially among developing writers. While student texts have been found to contain features that would be labelled plagiarism, interviews and text comparisons suggested that the writers did not intend to deceive (Pecorari, 2003). Patchwriting can therefore be understood as a transitional stage where students rely heavily on source language because they have not yet developed full control over academic writing conventions, and responses to such writing should focus on supporting students to develop

more appropriate ways of using sources, rather than punishing them (Howard, 1999; Pecorari, 2003).

While Pecorari's study highlights patchwriting as a developmental practice rather than deliberate dishonesty, later research explores how paraphrasing and copying can vary across learners and contexts, showing that source use often exists on a continuum rather than as a clear-cut category. Keck (2014) extends this perspective by showing that copying and paraphrasing exist along a continuum and may reflect developing competence, not simply dishonesty. Most L2 writers were found to paraphrase source language more often than they copied it, and unusually high copying rates were linked to a small number of students who copied extensively (Keck, 2004). The study also suggests that novice writers rely more on source text language than more experienced peers, which supports viewing source use as something that develops over time. Importantly, Keck argues that close paraphrasing does not automatically mean lack of skill, as it can serve rhetorical purposes such as demonstrating understanding of the author's main ideas.

Although paraphrasing is commonly presented as a core academic skill, some scholars caution that its instructional framing can be counterproductive. Doye (2013), for example, argues that paraphrasing is often taught primarily as a plagiarism-avoidance technique, which may lead students to focus on sentence-level rewriting rather than meaningful engagement with literature and the development of voice and argument. In contrast, a more developmental perspective suggests that close source use can represent a stage in learning academic discourse rather than intentional deception.

This debate is relevant to the present study because it shows that paraphrasing can function either as a tool for meaning-making and academic thinking or as a superficial rewriting practice, depending on how it is taught and assessed. However, most research on patchwriting and paraphrasing has been conducted in university contexts, highlighting the need to consider how source-based writing develops in upper secondary education, where students are still developing academic literacy skills before entering higher education. In a Swedish upper secondary context, Hellman's (2024) study of students in university preparatory programmes provides a useful way to describe different levels of source use. Hellman identifies four approaches—appropriation, patchwork, argument, and discussion—moving from less to more developed practices. The study also outlines critical aspects that students need to discern in order to develop, including separating their own ideas from the ideas of others and comparing or evaluating sources during the writing process.

In addition to describing different levels of source use, Swedish research has examined how pupils understand academic integrity and justify their source choices, which is important for understanding why responsible paraphrasing and source acknowledgement can be challenging at school level. This is relevant to paraphrasing because it shows that effective source use is not only about changing wording, but also about transparency, voice, and how sources function in the student's argument. Premat (2023) focuses on academic integrity at upper secondary level and argues that pupils' study techniques should be discussed in relation to future university expectations. In this action research, although pupils showed awareness of source criticism, many reported using sources such as Wikipedia for quick access to information while still feeling uncertain about quoting such sources in schoolwork. Premat suggests that this gap offers an opportunity to introduce academic integrity in a concrete way, with emphasis on citing all sources that contribute to a school task.

Taken together, these studies show that paraphrasing and source use are closely connected to both writing development and academic integrity. This helps explain why teachers may treat paraphrasing as evidence of understanding while also expressing concerns about assessing it reliably, particularly in the current AI-influenced classroom context. Because paraphrasing is closely connected to academic literacy and responsible source use, it is important to examine how it is positioned—explicitly or implicitly—within Swedish steering documents for English in upper secondary education.

The Swedish Educational Context and Steering Documents

Overview of Swedish Upper Secondary School Preparatory Programmes

Swedish national university preparatory programmes are explicitly designed to equip students with the knowledge and abilities required for higher education. The curriculum states that students in these programmes should have the opportunity to achieve a university preparatory qualification, meaning that they develop sufficient knowledge and skills to be well prepared for university studies. Within this mission, students are also expected to use knowledge to analyse information, reflect critically, solve problems, and develop independence in learning—capacities closely connected to academic reading and writing in higher education. Consequently, English instruction becomes particularly important in preparatory programmes because it supports students' ability to engage with demanding texts, use sources responsibly, and produce independent written work (Skolverket, 2024).

Swedish students enter upper secondary school with substantial prior exposure to English, including 480 hours of formal English instruction during compulsory schooling (Years 1-9). In the Gy25 system, English is structured into three levels (Level 1-3), and

Skolverket's commentary materials clarify how these levels relate to CEFR proficiency. Specifically, the content and grade E criteria correspond to CEFR B1.2 at English Level 1 (ENGE1000X), to CEFR B2.1 at English Level 2 (ENGE2000X), and to CEFR B2.2 at English Level 3 (ENGE3000X). These reference points indicate that Swedish upper secondary English education is designed to build on students' established language foundation and gradually move them toward upper-intermediate or advanced independent language use. In the context of university preparatory programmes, this offers a policy-based justification for expecting students to engage with academically oriented reading and writing tasks—including developing strategies such as paraphrasing—while acknowledging that performance may vary depending on individual proficiency and instructional support.

A comparison of curriculum frameworks Gy22 and Gy25 shows that the overall values and mission of Swedish schooling remain largely the same. Both documents emphasise democratic values, respect for human rights, and teaching based on scientific foundations and proven experience. At the same time, preparatory programmes are designed to prepare students for higher education, and this creates clear expectations about academic literacy. Students are supposed to read and understand more demanding texts, use information from sources, and express their own ideas in a clear and independent way. For this reason, it is relevant to examine how the English subject supports skills such as paraphrasing, which help students demonstrate understanding and avoid copying. In this study, the English syllabus is analysed using Skolverket's steering documents and commentary materials by comparing Gy22 (English 5–7) with Gy25 (English Levels 1–3) (Skolverket, 2022; Skolverket, 2024).

Guiding Principles

Gy25 describes knowledge as broad, encompassing facts, understanding, skills, and familiarity. Students are expected to become increasingly independent and reflective, which includes learning to examine information critically and communicate knowledge in meaningful ways. These expectations are closely connected to writing from sources and paraphrasing. Gy25 also introduces subject levels and subject-based grades, which aim to give students more time to develop their knowledge and reduce stress. The curriculum further highlights that assessment should be based on professional judgement, where grading criteria are interpreted together with the subject purpose, core content, and completed instruction, rather than being used as a checklist.

Finally, Gy25 describes digitalisation as both a possibility and a challenge. Students are expected to develop digital competence, but also to evaluate digital tools and online information critically. This is especially relevant today, as teachers must address the presence

of AI-based tools while ensuring that students work independently and use sources responsibly.

Research on English Syllabus Interpretation

Research on English syllabus interpretation in Swedish upper secondary education suggests that alignment with steering documents often requires substantial teacher interpretation rather than direct application of fixed guidelines. For instance, the instruction and assessment in the Gy22 English syllabus are distributed across core content and knowledge requirements, which can make it difficult for teachers to visualise and implement progress in practice (Davies, 2012). Similarly, while governing documents instruct the development of critical thinking, the concept itself is not defined, which places responsibility on teachers to interpret and implement it in the EFL classroom (Carrasco, 2021).

A review of the revised upper secondary English syllabus (implemented in July 2021) shows that reading-strategy expectations are present but broadly formulated (Brude & Öhman Ekman, 2021). The syllabus highlights strategies such as predicting content, asking questions, taking notes, identifying main ideas and drawing inferences. However, this brief strategy wording can make classroom implementation dependent on teachers' professional judgement, which may contribute to variation across classrooms. Likewise, syllabus terminology can be interpreted differently by EFL teachers who may not always perceive updated syllabi as providing clear guidance, which may contribute to diverse teaching and assessment approaches (Jeppsson, 2022). More recently, Larsen's syllabus analysis suggests that skill themes such as reading strategies are introduced through examples rather than exact meanings, leaving considerable room for interpretation and presumably leading to variations in instructional delivery (Larsen, 2025).

Overall, these studies indicate that key literacy-related objectives in English are often communicated in broad terms that require teacher mediation to become concrete classroom practice. However, comparatively less attention has been given to paraphrasing as a distinct reading-to-writing skill, despite its relevance for academic literacy, source use, and integrity in preparatory programmes.

Comparison of strategies Between Gy22 and Gy25

Across the two syllabi, Gy22 core content for English 5-7 tends to describe strategies and text handling in broader, more 'task-oriented' terms (e.g., *summarise, explain, report, argue*) (Skolverket, 2022). In contrast, Gy25 Levels 1-3 present strategy use in more explicit, process-oriented, and source-integrated ways that create clearer curricular conditions for paraphrasing (Skolverket, 2025). In Gy25 Reception, strategies are phrased as active

meaning-making actions—*retelling, associating, anticipating content, asking questions*, and later *note-taking, identifying main messages, sorting/visualising/summarising*—which are all closely connected to paraphrasing as ‘reformulating meaning’ rather than repeating wording.

In Production and Interaction, Gy22 emphasises ‘processing’ texts to *vary, clarify and create structure*. Gy25, however, is more explicit about the paraphrasing by requiring students to distinguish between source content and their own ideas (Level 1), synthesise content from multiple written sources (Level 2), and use sources with critical awareness and accepted citation practices within a specialisation area (Level 3). Gy25 also names interactional strategies such as rephrasing, explaining, summarising, and linking to others’ contributions—moves that directly operationalise paraphrasing as a communicative tool in discussion and written interaction. In contrast, Gy22 often frames strategies in general terms such as ‘participating in discussions’, without detailing these linguistic techniques.

Overall, Gy25 strengthens the curricular foundation for paraphrasing by making the strategic steps—reformulate → integrate → attribute → evaluate—more visible and assessable across levels, especially through explicit source-handling and ‘rephrasing/summarising’ as interaction strategies (Skolverket, 2022; Skolverket, 2024). Further details on reading and writing components in Gy22 vs. Gy25 are provided in Appendix A.

Research on Teacher Cognition

Teacher cognition encompasses the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that guide teachers’ work, and research shows that these internal perspectives significantly shape the instructional choices teachers make in the classroom (Borg, 2006). In other words, teachers do not simply apply curriculum instructions directly. Instead, they make professional decisions based on their experience, values, and beliefs about what counts as learning and what students need in order to succeed. This perspective is important for the present study because it helps explain why teachers may approach paraphrasing differently even when they work under the same steering documents. Teachers’ beliefs and knowledge mediate the relationship between policy, classroom context, and teaching practice, meaning that instruction is shaped by both external requirements and teachers’ internal understandings (Borg, 2006). Borg also notes that although teacher cognition research has discussed literacy, writing-related practices have received less attention, which supports the need for research into how teachers understand specific academic skills such as paraphrasing. This is especially relevant in the Swedish upper secondary context, where teachers must interpret broad curriculum aims and translate into concrete classroom activities and assessment.

Research on teacher beliefs provides a useful framework for understanding how teachers interpret academic skills and decide what to prioritise in their teaching. Fives and Buehl (2010) describe teacher beliefs as interpretive lenses that shape how curricular goals are understood and turned into instructional priorities. This means that teachers' beliefs influence not only what they teach, but also what they consider evidence of understanding. In the present study, this framework helps analyse how teachers view paraphrasing as part of reading comprehension and academic writing, and how they decide whether it should be explicitly taught or treated as an assumed skill.

Reflective teaching research further highlights that teachers' decisions are often based on professional judgement rather than fixed procedures. Reflective teaching includes problem-setting, evaluating practice, attending context, as well as positioning teachers as professionals who continuously consider what works, what is fair, and what should be done in specific situations (Calderhead, 1989). This perspective supports analysing teachers' accounts of paraphrasing instruction as thoughtful choices shaped by classroom realities rather than as simple compliance with policy. It is also relevant when teachers face new challenges, such as AI-based tools, which can affect how paraphrasing is taught and assessed.

Finally, research suggests that beliefs can differ in the extent to which they support the integration of complex academic skills into everyday teaching. Some belief systems may limit instruction when teachers view a skill as competing with content goals or assessment demands, while other beliefs can support integration by seeing the skill as enhancing learning and student engagement. This distinction helps interpret variation in teachers' approaches to paraphrasing, especially when curricular expectations remain implicit and teachers must decide how to respond to challenges such as students relying on AI for shortcuts.

AI-Based Tools and Their Impact on Teaching and Learning English

With the advent of AI-based tools, their use has reached an increasingly wide audience; therefore, their adoption has become difficult to avoid. These tools are also becoming progressively popular in educational contexts among both teachers and students in support of academic work and language learning (Marzuki et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025; Triana et al., 2025). While teachers often benefit from them to simplify aspects of their daily instructional routines and feedback-related tasks, students frequently rely on them to support comprehension, complete academic tasks more efficiently, or reduce time spent on studying.

Most students perceive ChatGPT as a helpful resource because it reduces linguistic challenges and supports reading and paraphrasing skills by offering alternative textual formulations (Triana et al., 2025). Students also believe that AI-based tools may lower the

risk of plagiarism by providing language support and multiple rewording options. However, some express scepticism about whether ChatGPT can replace manual paraphrasing and often question its effectiveness in preventing plagiarism.

Although AI-based paraphrasing tools are highly efficient in processing original texts by interpreting word meanings, restructuring sentences, and identifying key words and phrases within seconds, they show limitations in word choice, sentence structure, cohesion, coherence, and emphasis (Fitria, 2025). Consequently, a continued emphasis on manual paraphrasing is supported, as it promotes originality, flexibility, language accuracy, and communicative effectiveness. Despite the ability of AI-based tools to preserve the original meaning of source texts, final versions and quality control require careful manual review.

Research has also begun to explore teachers' perspectives on students' using AI tools for their studies. Although teachers perceive AI tools as useful in writing courses, they still raise concerns that students' overreliance on AI tools might negatively affect students' critical thinking and creative writing abilities (Marzuki et al., 2023). Teachers participating in Marzuki et al.'s study agreed that AI tools can be beneficial when used as supplementary resources rather than primary instructional tools. In another study, teachers' attitudes toward the use of these tools affected students' engagement with them. A more positive and encouraging stance from teachers regarding the use of the tools as a digital support helped students to be more confident in developing their writing skills for professional communication. Conversely, when teachers expressed more concern or reluctance toward AI tools, students displayed less confidence and were less inclined to use AI writing tools outside the classroom context (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Overall, existing studies show that emerging technologies complicate the interpretive nature of paraphrasing instruction, emphasizing the need to explore how teachers' beliefs align with curricular expectations and policy guidance. Paraphrasing is widely recognised as a key academic literacy strategy that supports comprehension, ethical source use, and the transformation of reading into writing. Yet, it remains difficult to teach and assess because it requires both linguistic flexibility and cognitive engagement. At the same time, research on Swedish steering documents indicates that core academic abilities in English are often expressed through broad curricular formulations that depend on teachers' professional interpretation, which can lead to variation in classroom practice. This interpretive space has become even more consequential with the rapid development of AI-based paraphrasing and writing tools, which complicate teachers' efforts to assess students' independent language production and genuine understanding.

Despite these developments, limited research has examined how English teachers in Swedish upper secondary preparatory programmes conceptualise paraphrasing, how their beliefs align with steering document expectations across Gy22 and Gy25, and how they adjust instruction and assessment in response to AI-related challenges. For this reason, the present study investigates teachers' perspectives on paraphrasing as a reading and writing strategy, their perceived curriculum alignment, and their approaches to managing AI tools while maintaining valid and meaningful assessment practices.

Methodology

Qualitative interviewing aims to explore participants' perspectives and experiences through their own responses (Patton, 2015). The present study employed a semi-structured interview design that combined elements of the traditional social science research interview and the pragmatic interview approach described by Patton (2015). This dual-method approach ensured both structure and flexibility: a consistent set of core questions was asked in the same sequence, while follow-up questions allowed the interviewer to explore emerging ideas in greater depth (Brinkmann, 2014; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The interview guide focused on teachers' perspectives on paraphrasing instruction, its role and importance in reading comprehension and academic writing, its alignment with Swedish steering documents, and the influence of AI-based tools.

Participants

The dataset consisted of six English teachers working in Swedish upper secondary school preparatory programmes. Participants taught English 1 (in line with Gy25) and 6 and/or English 7 (in line with Gy22). Their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 26 years. To protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the study.

Table 1

Participants' Background Information

Pseudonym	Teaching Experience (years)	Courses Taught	Interview Format
John	4	English 6 and 7	Face-to-face
David	4	English 6	Zoom
Dylan	26	English 1 and 6	Zoom
Will	4	English 1 and 6	Zoom
Kylie	10+	English 7	Zoom
Amelie	2	English 1, 6 and 7	Zoom

Note. This table provides background information about the participants.

Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide was designed to collect rich qualitative data about teachers' approaches to paraphrasing instruction in preparatory programmes. The questions followed Patton's (2015) recommended categories of interview questions to ensure a logical progression from background to beliefs, classroom practices, and future expectations.

1. Background and Knowledge
2. Experience and Perceptions
3. Instructional Approaches
4. Challenges in Teaching and Learning Paraphrasing
5. Curriculum and Steering Documents
6. Future-Oriented Expectations

A complete version of the interview guide is provided in Appendix B.

Data Collection Procedure

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through Zoom and lasted approximately 20-35 minutes. Participants were informed about the main topic beforehand. Prior to the interview, all participants read and signed an Interview Consent Form; a sample is provided in Appendix C.

Participant Recruitment

A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) was used to target English teachers instructing English 1 (in line with Gy25), and/or English 6/7 (in line with Gy22) courses within Swedish upper secondary preparatory programmes. Recruitment sources included verified networks such as school websites (Gymnasium i Sverige) and professional Facebook groups for English teachers in Sweden. These sources ensured that participants met the inclusion criteria: currently teaching English in preparatory programmes and engaged with Gy25 (English 1) and/or Gy22 (English 6/7) course requirements.

The recruitment approach entailed a structured email request for interviews addressed to administrative staff (rectors, principals, coordinators, and heads of department) and a structured email invitation distributed to a wider pool of potential participants within English faculty networks (samples of the emails are presented in Appendix D).

Recruitment initially focused on schools located in Malmö in order to facilitate geographical proximity for potential face-to-face interviews, resulting in a single positive response. Following this, the recruitment scope was expanded geographically to obtain the necessary sample size, including participants from upper secondary schools in Helsingborg, Göteborg, Kristianstad, and Stockholm. Interviews were arranged through email

correspondence, with follow-up emails confirming dates and times. Despite extensive recruitment efforts, the final sample remained small, reflecting the pragmatic constraints that shape sample sizes in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Setting and Chronology

While the first interview was conducted face-to-face, all the other interviews were arranged through Zoom online meetings.

The face-to-face interview was conducted on October 10, 2025, at Orkanen Library, Malmö University. Prior to the interview recording, the participant read and signed a hard copy of the Interview Consent Form. The interview questions were demonstrated on the study-room monitor using a PowerPoint presentation. This enabled the interviewee to have clear visual access to the interview questions throughout the session. This interview was digitally recorded using the researcher's personal computer.

The five online interviews were conducted through Zoom with participants located outside Malmö. Prior to each online interview, all five participants were emailed a PDF version of the signed and dated Interview Consent Form, which they were asked to sign and return digitally. During the Zoom sessions, the interview questions were shared visually through a PowerPoint presentation to ensure clear and consistent visual access to the questions and to facilitate participant engagement. Each online session was digitally recorded using both the researcher's personal computer and a mobile phone to secure data redundancy and recording quality.

Interview Implementation

All interviews started with self-introductions and a brief overview of the interview topic. Initial questions focused on participants' teaching backgrounds and experience to establish context. Subsequent questions explored participants' perspectives regarding the role and importance of paraphrasing as a strategy in reading comprehension, academic writing, and students' linguistic development.

Further questions addressed participants' instructional methods, assessment strategies, and tools used in paraphrasing instruction, as well as their approaches to explaining ethical writing and unintentional plagiarism. Additional questions focused on challenges that students experience when paraphrasing, particularly in relation to language proficiency and background knowledge. The interviews also explored teachers' interpretations of curricular expectations. Each interview concluded with future-oriented reflections, such as recommendations for improving paraphrasing instruction and perspectives on AI-based tools.

Data Handling and Transcription

All interviews were digitally recorded. The face-to-face interview was recorded using the researcher's personal computer; the online interviews were recorded on both the researcher's computer and a mobile phone to ensure backup. After collecting the data, all interviews were transcribed using the Microsoft Word's audio transcription tool, manually checked for accuracy, and saved as Word documents for later analysis. All interviews were conducted in English; therefore, no translation was required, and participants' exact wording was retained in the transcripts and reported quotations.

Data Analysis

The analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which are presented in Table 2. These phases structured the systematic analysis of the interview data. Following transcription, repeated readings of the transcripts enabled thorough familiarisation with participants' perspectives on paraphrasing, curriculum alignment and AI use. Inductive coding was conducted across all interviews to identify recurring patterns related to participants' beliefs, instructional practices, assessment approaches and interpretations of Swedish steering documents.

Table 2

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phases	Descriptions
1. Familiarising Yourself with the Data	Transcribing the interviews and engaging in repeated close reading of the transcripts to gain in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives on paraphrasing, curriculum interpretation, and AI use.
2. Generating Initial Codes	Systematically identifying and coding meaningful features of the interview data related to participants' beliefs and collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for Themes	Organising related codes into broader potential themes that captured recurring patterns across participants' accounts.
4. Reviewing Themes	Checking whether themes work in relation to coded extracts and the full data set to ensure coherence and relevance to the RQs.
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Clarifying the focus and scope of each theme, specifying how it related to the RQs, and assigning names that reflected shared patterns.
6. Producing the Report	Selecting illustrative interview extracts, integrating the thematic findings with relevant literature and policy documents.

Note. Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Following initial coding, codes were organised into broader candidate themes. These themes were reviewed in relation to both individual extracts and the dataset as a whole to ensure internal coherence and conceptual consistency. During the refinement phase, themes were clearly defined and named to reflect shared patterns across participants while staying focused on cases. Representative extracts were then selected and interpreted in relation to research questions and relevant literature to produce a coherent and theoretically grounded account of the results.

In line with Patton's (2015) cross-case approach, the themes were also compared across participants, which supported the identification of similarities and differences in participants' perspectives, rationales, and classroom practices. To increase transparency in how themes were developed, the coding process was organised using a cross-case matrix across all participants, and the final themes were visually mapped.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the analytic process to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness. Particular attention was given to how interpretive decisions were made during coding, theme development, and theme refinement (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Theme Development

Four major themes emerged through the iterative process of reading, coding, comparing, and refining the data, consistent with both Braun and Clarke's (2006) structured thematic analysis approach and Patton's (2015) interpretive framework:

1. The Role of Paraphrasing
2. Current Curriculum and Policy Documents
3. AI Impact on Paraphrasing
4. Expectations and Recommendations

Ethical Considerations

All data were anonymised and protected in accordance with the Swedish Research Council's *Good Research Practice* (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). To strengthen participants' privacy and data security, identifying information such as email addresses was removed from the dataset after recruitment and scheduling were completed. In addition, audio recordings were deleted following transcription and verification to minimise the risk of unauthorised access.

Furthermore, Patton's (2015) comprehensive checklist of common ethical issues was used as a guiding document throughout the research process, with a particular focus on ethical concerns related to design, data collection, data protection, analysis and reporting. The

checklist also supported the development of the Interview Consent Form to ensure that participants' rights, confidentiality, and privacy protection measures were clearly addressed.

Results

This chapter presents the results from the six semi-structured interviews. The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), moving from initial coding to the grouping of recurring patterns across participants' accounts. Through this process, the analysis generated four main themes that reflect how teachers described the role of paraphrasing in English instruction, how they interpreted its place in Swedish steering documents, how AI-based tools were perceived as influencing paraphrasing practices, and what changes they recommended for future teaching and policy support. The results are reported as teachers' perceptions and experiences, supported by illustrative interview extracts, and are presented in relation to the study's research questions. Visual thematic maps illustrating the organisation of the four themes are provided in Appendix F for reference.

1. The Role of Paraphrasing
2. Current Curriculum and Documentation
3. AI Impact on Paraphrasing
4. Expectations and Recommendations

Theme 1: The Role of Paraphrasing

From the codes in the data analysis, two main categories emerged within this theme: Teachers' Preference and Aid for Students. The results in the first category describe participants' perspectives and choices concerning the role of paraphrasing in both reading comprehension and academic writing instruction. The second category reflects participants' views on how implementing this strategy can positively influence and assist students in comprehending reading texts and completing writing assignments.

Teachers' Preference

Across interviews, paraphrasing was framed as a valuable strategy and a key indicator of deep comprehension. It was described as a "cornerstone" of academic writing and an essential cognitive and linguistic skill (David), as well as "the benchmark of really having understood" the material being read or written (Amelie). Likewise, paraphrasing was presented as a sign of competence in English, as it demonstrates "that you are invested in what you're doing" (John). John further explained that using academic language through paraphrasing allows students to "reach whole new levels of nuance and complexity" and "becomes more paramount" because it shows that "students can understand the implied meaning."

A consistent result was that paraphrasing was perceived as fundamental to the genres and academic papers that “students are expected to produce” at university level. Its role was emphasised not only to demonstrate reading comprehension but also “to help them [students] to process information and to use it for their own production” (David). Paraphrasing was similarly described as a “very ultimate skill” in academic writing, as it helps students “to make the language active for” themselves and enables them to “create new sentences with the same meaning” (Kylie). It was further emphasised that paraphrasing has a “very essential role in critical thinking” because it is one of the techniques that can be used “to confirm what the other parties have said,” “to give some kind of confirmation, [...] some kind of praise” (Dylan).

Taken together, these accounts suggest that the participants view paraphrasing as a highly effective and valuable academic literacy strategy that should be explicitly taught and preserved within English instruction (Will).

Aid for Students

Participants described paraphrasing as a tool that supports students’ critical thinking and awareness of their own learning. Paraphrasing was highlighted as becoming “even more essential” because it allows “students to express themselves” and “show a deeper understanding of a topic, of a subject, of a theme of a book” (John). This view was echoed by Dylan, who viewed paraphrasing as a key method for “process[ing] learning more deeply” and as playing an “essential role” in critical thinking, since it enables students to “interpret,” “recognize,” “evaluate ideas,” and perhaps “helps them not to accept things without thinking” (Dylan). Dylan also framed paraphrasing as “a way to empower students’ creativity” and “motivation towards working effectively,” allowing them to produce their own texts. He further noted that developing the skill can encourage students to “believe in themselves and have some sort of self-confidence” as they learn to express the same ideas as the source text using their own words (Dylan).

Paraphrasing was also described as a learning strategy through which students can reflect “how well” they understand the topic and the content they are expected to learn (David). Will similarly emphasised that paraphrasing “has an important role,” as it helps students understand and use other people’s work for new purposes, thereby promoting both comprehension and transformation of source material. In addition, paraphrasing was described as one of the useful strategies for students preparing for national tests, especially when they are struggling with language learning (Kylie). Kylie explained that “students have to think through ... the options” they know for the same noun or verb and “remember all the

different synonyms.” Finally, it was noted that it allows students to defend what they have read and written, giving them “a lot more power to explain and really understand the material” (Amelie).

Overall, these results indicate that participants view paraphrasing as a tool that supports students’ comprehension and language development and promotes their self-confidence and metacognitive awareness.

While Theme 1 explored how participants conceptualised the role of paraphrasing, Theme 2 shifts attention to how this role is articulated and negotiated within Swedish steering documents and classroom practice.

Theme 2: Current Curriculum and Documentation

This theme presents participants’ perceptions of how paraphrasing is framed within the Swedish upper secondary school preparatory curriculum and policy documents in regard to the subject of English, and how participants relate to these formulations.

Lack of Explicitness

A consistent result across all interviews was that paraphrasing is not explicitly named in the official steering documents. Participants repeatedly noted that the term “paraphrasing” is missing from curriculum and policy texts, and that this absence contributes to a lack of clarity regarding how the skill should be taught. John stated that the documents do not “state a lot of things too expressively connected to this [paraphrasing],” particularly regarding “strict instructions” about structure or reference systems. He summarised this by saying, “There’s no explicit instruction towards anything really.”

The lack of explicitness was described as extending beyond terminology to include limited guidance on what specific strategies should be taught within English. English was contrasted with subjects such as History, where it is “very clear in what I’m supposed to teach ... I know exactly what to do” (John). In comparison, English was portrayed as lacking clear emphasis on what and how to teach, especially regarding specific skills such as paraphrasing (John). Similarly, David noted that while the curriculum addresses “the use of sources and the description of writing strategies,” it “doesn’t explicitly bring up paraphrasing as a word.” Kylie expressed a comparable view, stating that the curriculum “doesn’t really say anything directly about paraphrasing.”

At the same time, the documents were perceived as emphasising broader expectations linked to producing language independently. Amelie observed that English course documents mention that “students should be able to produce content with their own words,” but added that “specifically to paraphrasing,” there is no mention. Dylan similarly noted that

paraphrasing is “not that clearly seen in documents or directives” but appears to be implicitly present through course objectives requiring that students “read a text,” “produce something using their own words,” and “interpret the film or the short story on their own.” According to Dylan, these expectations indirectly refer to paraphrasing, even if the term itself is never explicitly mentioned.

Collectively, these accounts suggest that participants experience paraphrasing as an underspecified skill within the steering documents, even when related goals may be present in more general terms.

Implicit Guidance

Although paraphrasing was perceived as absent as an explicit term, several participants described its purpose as being communicated implicitly through broader objectives. Paraphrasing was often positioned as part of general academic writing expectations and the ability to use language in an essay-like manner (Kylie). David also noted that paraphrasing “is implicitly referred to” as a writing strategy, as the grading criteria expect students to “show understanding of spoken and written texts” and to use source material in a relevant way in their own production.

Similarly, paraphrasing was perceived as being “quite clear between the lines,” as the documents state that lessons should contribute to students’ ability to “evaluate and use content from different types of sources both in their own production and also interaction” (Will). This has been interpreted as “impl[y]ing paraphrasing” because “when you use material from a source, then you need to paraphrase it into your own work” (Will). The syllabus focuses on producing content in students’ own words and “creating personal content” was also interpreted as indirectly referring to paraphrasing (Amelie).

In addition, implicit guidance was associated with limitations in assessment. Several participants suggested that the lack of explicit curriculum emphasis contributes to weak assessment support for paraphrasing instruction, particularly through national examinations. David noted that paraphrasing is given a “limited scope” in national tests, and Amelie added that although the tests are designed with the curriculum in mind, there is “not an emphasis on writing with your own words.” Dylan also observed that although paraphrasing may be used by some students in the national speaking examination, there is “no mention” of it in official guidance.

Taken as a whole, these results indicate that paraphrasing is perceived as present mainly through broad learning outcomes rather than through clear instructional or assessment guidance.

Policy Ambiguity, Teacher Autonomy and Interpretation

Curriculum ambiguity was repeatedly linked to teacher autonomy and individual initiative in deciding whether and how paraphrasing should be taught. David stated that while the documents emphasise strategies related to source selection and criticality, this creates ambiguity that “leaves plenty of room for interpretation.” Kylie similarly suggested that the lack of clarity “gives you open hands to do whatever you want” and that it is “really for each teacher to interpret what that means.”

This freedom was described as influencing instructional choices, including whether paraphrasing becomes an explicit classroom focus. John noted that while the curriculum may be more explicit regarding structural features of writing (e.g. introduction, body, and conclusion in writing), the method of instruction “is very free.” He also stated that teachers are expected to teach strategies, but the curriculum “doesn’t mention exactly what strategies.” Although teachers may teach components such as topic sentences and linking devices, John argued that such instruction becomes ineffective if paraphrasing is disregarded. Drawing on his experience in a university writing course, he described paraphrasing as an expected skill for students and therefore chose to teach it explicitly.

Amelie also connected her instructional decisions to personal interpretation of broad goals such as “having critical thinking.” She stated, “I have power over almost the entire English course ... as long as the end goal is the core content,” and therefore implemented paraphrasing at a “personal level” because she views it as a “really good technique” for helping students improve their English. Dylan similarly described teaching paraphrasing as a matter of his “own discretion,” explaining that he wants students to be “equipped with that skill” before entering higher education.

This pattern suggests that policy ambiguity contributes to variation in how paraphrasing is prioritised, with instruction often depending on teachers’ interpretations, professional judgement, and initiative.

Theme 3: AI Impact on Paraphrasing

AI-based tools were perceived as increasingly present in English education and as directly influencing how paraphrasing is taught, practised and assessed. Across interviews, AI was associated with both instructional opportunities and challenges, particularly in relation to academic integrity and the assessment of students’ independent language ability.

The Dual Role of AI

A recurring result was that AI-based tools were perceived as having a dual impact on paraphrasing instruction. While AI was positioned as a practical resource for teachers' instructional support, it was also viewed as a potential threat to deeper learning goals and student-generated paraphrasing.

AI as an Instructional Aid. AI was framed as a tool that can support paraphrasing instruction by increasing efficiency and enabling clearer modelling of writing practices. Its use was linked to saving time and generating instructional examples, particularly for classroom demonstration (David). AI was also described as facilitating practical teaching of paraphrasing and referencing, for instance through the ability to “copy the original idea, paste it into your document, break it apart, play around with the words, [and] get the citing correctly” (John). In addition, AI tools such as ChatGPT or Perplexity were associated with producing reading comprehension materials that can be edited and refined for classroom use (Dylan).

AI as a Threat to Learning. At the same time, paraphrasing was perceived as being undermined by students' AI use when tools are employed as shortcuts rather than learning aids. AI-generated outputs were linked to “quick solution[s]” and a “lack of understanding” (Will), which were viewed as limiting students' active engagement with language and meaning-making (Dylan). AI was also identified as “an obstacle for language learners because it is an easy way out” (David). In this context, paraphrasing was framed as becoming “even more essential,” particularly for protecting critical thinking and deeper understanding (John). AI was also described as “the newest plagiarism tool,” with students “just using AI now, immediately,” rather than drawing from texts independently (Amelie).

Overall, these results indicate that AI was perceived as both enabling and complicating paraphrasing instruction, depending on whether it supports learning processes or replaces them.

Pedagogical and Assessment Shifts

AI-related challenges were closely linked to shifts in classroom practice and assessment design. Across interviews, paraphrasing assessment was portrayed as increasingly difficult when students' production could not be confidently assumed to be student-written.

Institutional responses were described as including the introduction of “locked programs” to prevent students from using AI during writing tasks. However, this was also perceived as creating new constraints in teaching, since it limits the use of digital tools as demonstration aids during instruction (John). AI was further described as making it “very

difficult to correctly assess students' actual level of language" (John), suggesting a perceived weakening of assessment validity.

In response, assessment practices were described as shifting towards in-class tasks that reduce opportunities for AI misuse. For example, shorter in-class assignments were used because otherwise students "just cheat," and reading answers aloud allowed "uniform AI outputs" to be identified more easily (Amelie). AI-produced language was also linked to concerns about writing style becoming increasingly standardised, with the "cadence and the structure" of AI-generated text potentially becoming a default form of expression, resulting in writing that sounds more "non-human" (Amelie).

Taken as a whole, the results suggest that AI has contributed to more controlled assessment and increased teacher attention to identifying student authenticity in paraphrased writing.

The Future of Paraphrasing: Evolution or Disappearance?

The future of paraphrasing was repeatedly framed as uncertain, with the skill described as standing at a "crossroads where it might disappear or it might evolve." In this sense, paraphrasing was positioned as both at risk and potentially strengthened by the presence of AI.

Fear of Disappearance. Paraphrasing was described as "more likely to disappear due to AI" or to "evolve mostly in a negative direction" largely because AI tools were perceived as making it very difficult to accurately assess students' independent language competence (John). Doubts were also expressed about students moving away from the misuse of tools such as ChatGPT when learning paraphrasing (Amelie), indicating concern that the strategy may become less meaningful as a marker of comprehension.

Optimistic Evolution. Despite these concerns, paraphrasing was also framed as likely to remain relevant. It was described as a skill that will "continue to be there" (Will), and as a potential future "focus point" in language learning, particularly influencing productive skills such as speaking and writing (Kylie). AI was also connected to potential language development over time, with the idea that widespread exposure to AI-based language support may "heighten" overall language proficiency (Dylan). The increased use of AI-detection tools (e.g. Turnitin) was further associated with the possibility that students might be pushed beyond simple copying and instead engage in reading, identifying main ideas, and restructuring language to "claim the ownership" of their writing (Dylan).

Overall, these accounts suggest that paraphrasing was perceived as a skill that may change its status under AI influence but not necessarily disappear.

Students' Reliance on AI for Shortcuts

Students' tendency to use AI tools was frequently linked to concerns about reduced effort and weakened learning outcomes associated with paraphrasing. AI use was often framed as enabling avoidance of the cognitive work required to process and reformulate source material.

The “temptation” to let AI “do the work for them [students]” was described as a challenge, with students “taking the easy way out” (David). Similarly, “shortcuts” were associated with reduced engagement in the writing process, sometimes attributed to “laziness” (Dylan). In this context, inaccurate paraphrasing was linked to “a lack of understanding” and a desire for “a quick solution” (Will). Strong frustration was also expressed regarding students “blatantly copying what ChatGPT has said” (Amelie), indicating that AI reliance may prevent both comprehension and language development.

In sum, the results indicate that AI was perceived as increasing the risk of superficial writing practices, making student-written paraphrasing harder to ensure and assess.

Theme 4: Expectations and Recommendations for Paraphrasing Instruction

The final theme captures participants' suggestions, recommendations, and expectations regarding paraphrasing instruction within the Swedish upper secondary school curriculum. All participants called for paraphrasing to be explicitly supported in the curriculum and policy documents as an essential academic strategy, introduced at an early stage, and reinforced through professional development.

Call for Explicit Curriculum Inclusion

A consistent result across interviews was that explicit curriculum inclusion of paraphrasing was widely advocated. Paraphrasing was perceived as insufficiently supported in current steering documents due to reliance on implicit expectations and general statements. Therefore, clearer and more direct references to paraphrasing were framed as necessary to ensure consistent and systematic instruction across schools.

Paraphrasing was described as something that “can be stated more explicitly” (David). Explicit references were viewed as important for strengthening both instruction and shared understanding of the strategy. David emphasised that “teaching paraphrasing and quoting, the purpose, the procedure, and the examples of content” must be “at least in the commentary material.” He further suggested that “stating it [the strategy] explicitly” and outlining “the negative consequences of not using it,” including increased “relying on AI,” “might be something that could be useful.”

The need for explicit inclusion was also linked to national assessment contexts. Paraphrasing was described as a strategy that “could be very explicitly mentioned,” particularly since it may already appear in students’ speaking performance during the national examination (Dylan). This was connected to a desire for clearer curriculum directives, such as explicit references to paraphrasing in “course descriptions and course objectives” to support its being “unanimously” taught throughout Sweden (Dylan).

In addition, paraphrasing was framed as benefiting from more structured placement within the syllabus. A dedicated paraphrasing component was proposed in the form of a distinct instructional unit, defined as a “separate point” that supports students in “speaking and writing” and ensures focused instruction (Kylie). Similarly, paraphrasing was offered to be specified as a “technique” defined with “specific goals in the curriculum or in the curricular documents” (Amelie). This was linked to a preference for instructional emphasis on students “really understanding the entirety of a text,” rather than focusing mainly on summarising or “just finding answers in a text” (Amelie).

Overall, these results indicate that explicit curriculum framing of paraphrasing was viewed as a key condition for consistent instruction and shared expectations in English education.

Emphasizing the Need for Early and Sustained Teaching

Building on the call for explicit inclusion, paraphrasing instruction was repeatedly framed as a foundational academic skill that should be introduced earlier and reinforced over time, rather than being treated mainly as preparation for higher education.

Early introduction of paraphrasing was linked to the development of study habits and sustained academic discipline. Paraphrasing was described as needing to begin with more explicit teaching at an earlier stage, as “starting it earlier would also implement a sense of work ethic, a sense of habit of doing it as well” (John). Similarly, paraphrasing instruction was positioned as necessary “at the preparatory stage before university,” since many lecturers assume that students already know how to paraphrase (Will). Clearer expectations were also associated with supporting newer teachers, as it would be “nice to be very explicit, like ‘teach paraphrasing’ or something” (Will).

Paraphrasing was further portrayed as underdeveloped when students reach upper secondary education. It was described as “very new when they come to me,” suggesting that many students arrive without prior familiarity with the strategy (Amelie). Paraphrasing was also linked to deeper comprehension, as it was described as helping distinguish students who

can “understand what is important in the text and [are] able to paraphrase it” from those who primarily locate information (Amelie).

In addition, sustained practice of paraphrasing was associated with maintaining the skill’s long-term value. Paraphrasing was described as “a skill that, in order to maintain its importance, has to be continuously advocated and used by the communities that have practised it before” (David). This view was connected to expectations in university examinations, where students must demonstrate understanding and learning through appropriate study techniques and learning outcomes. For paraphrasing to “be a part of the future,” its importance was framed as needing to be reinforced consistently “to keep it alive” (David).

Overall, these results reveal that early and continuous paraphrasing instruction was viewed as essential for strengthening students’ academic preparedness and long-term learning practices.

Recommendations for Teacher Professional Development and Autonomy

To support the long-term implementation of paraphrasing instruction, participants offered recommendations focused on professional development, shared collaboration, and practical resources.

Professional Development. Professional development was described as a practical way to support teachers in paraphrasing instruction. Kylie suggested that training could be delivered through “seminars or workshops or some kind of hands-on, try-it-yourself” activities that would attract and benefit teachers. Will similarly emphasised the importance of teacher modelling and training opportunities that allow teachers to practise instruction, particularly as support for new teachers.

Collegial Discussions. In addition to formal training, collegial discussions were framed as a way to build shared understanding and consistency. David advocated collegial cooperation and highlighted the value of “collegial discussions” where teachers explicitly agree on key questions such as “Okay, what is paraphrasing? How are we teaching it? Why are we teaching it? When are we teaching it?” He suggested that such shared reflection could strengthen both the quality and coherence of instruction.

Teacher Autonomy. At the same time, autonomy and professional judgement were described as essential for effective teaching. David noted that “not every class is the same,” and therefore pedagogical decision-making must “require the teacher’s professional judgement.” He further noted that classroom decisions should retain the teacher’s responsibility, as “every teacher has their own autonomy to make the call in the classroom.”

The Need for Educational Materials. Finally, structured materials were viewed as helpful for supporting students' independent revision. David highlighted the need for accessible resources and documentation that students can revisit, such as materials “documenting, okay, ‘How do you use annotations?’, ‘How do you paraphrase?’”

In sum, these recommendations suggest a need for both shared support structures and continued professional autonomy in paraphrasing instruction.

Overall, Theme 4 highlights a shared expectation that paraphrasing should be more explicitly supported through curriculum wording, earlier instruction, and professional resources to strengthen consistency across Swedish upper secondary education.

Discussion

The present study examined six English teachers' perspectives on paraphrasing in Swedish upper secondary preparatory programmes, with particular attention to how participants describe and reflect upon their approaches to paraphrasing in their teaching, how these expressed beliefs align with Swedish steering documents, and how AI-based tools are perceived to influence instruction and assessment. The discussion is organised around the four themes reported in the Results section and addresses the research questions by interpreting what these reported patterns suggest in relation to previous research and policy expectations.

Paraphrasing as an Academic Literacy Strategy

Throughout the dataset, paraphrasing was framed as a central academic literacy practice rather than a linguistic rewriting technique. It was consistently positioned as evidence of deeper comprehension and a strategy that enables students to interpret source meaning, reformulate ideas, and transfer source content into independent academic writing. In this sense, paraphrasing was not treated merely as a technical skill, but as an epistemic indicator of understanding. This view aligns with research emphasising that effective paraphrasing requires meaning-based processing and interpretive engagement rather than surface-level synonym substitution (Shi, 2012; Tran, 2024). It also supports the broader reading-to-writing perspective in which comprehension and written production function as mutually supportive academic skills (Hirvela, 2004; Hirvela & Du, 2013).

In addition to functioning as an indicator of understanding, paraphrasing was perceived as supporting students' linguistic development, including vocabulary expansion, syntactic flexibility, and increased confidence in expressing ideas independently. These perceptions reflect earlier claims that paraphrasing practices can strengthen language resources and promote more active engagement with academic texts (Escudero et al., 2019; Hungwe, 2019; Nirwana, 2020). At the same time, the emphasis placed on paraphrasing as a learnable and developmental skill resonates with literature suggesting that students' reliance on source language can reflect emerging academic writing competence rather than intentional dishonesty (Hyytinen et al., 2017; Keck, 2014; Pecorari, 2003). From this perspective, paraphrasing instruction can be understood as supporting students' gradual movement from closer source reliance toward more independent academic voice (Hyytinen et al., 2017; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2019).

On the whole, these findings reinforce existing research while also highlighting how teachers conceptualise paraphrasing as both cognitively demanding and developmentally scaffolded. Paraphrasing was therefore positioned not simply as a supportive classroom

activity, but as a structurally significant component of academic literacy preparation for higher education.

Curriculum Alignment: The Need for Clearer Instructional Support

A key finding was that paraphrasing was seen as underspecified within Swedish steering documents, even though related expectations were perceived as present through broader statements such as using content “in one’s own words” and demonstrating understanding of sources. This pattern reflects prior research suggesting that Swedish steering documents often communicate key competencies in broadly formulated terms, leaving significant responsibility to teachers to interpret how skills should be taught and assessed (Carrasco, 2021; Davies, 2012; Jeppsson, 2023). When paraphrasing is not explicitly named, the skill may become dependent on individual teacher priorities, personal experience, and in-class assessment routines rather than being treated as a shared curricular focus.

In this sense, the findings point to what may be described as a curricular interpretive gap: although paraphrasing-related expectations are embedded in broader competence descriptors, the absence of explicit terminology requires teachers to translate abstract aims into concrete pedagogical practices. While such interpretive space reflects the professional autonomy central to Swedish education, it may also contribute to uneven implementation of complex academic skills.

At the same time, the comparison between Gy22 and Gy25 suggests that Gy25 strengthens the strategic dimension of English by framing comprehension strategies more explicitly and making source-handling expectations more visible across levels, especially through references to summarising, rephrasing, and distinguishing source content from one’s own ideas (Skolverket, 2022; Skolverket, 2024). This indicates a potentially stronger curricular foundation for paraphrasing-related competence, even if the term paraphrasing remains absent.

As Gy25 is implemented gradually, the transition period means that different teaching teams may follow different syllabus structures at the same time. This was reflected in the dataset, where some participants taught both English 1 (Gy25) and English 6/7 (Gy22). In such cases, paraphrasing-related competence may be more visible through Gy25 wording, but it remains indirectly communicated rather than clearly named. The findings suggest that this continued implicitness can contribute to variation in classroom focus, including cases where paraphrasing is not taught as a distinct instructional strategy but instead appears mainly as informal classroom support (e.g. rephrasing teacher feedback when students do not understand).

This “room for interpretation” becomes particularly important for source-based academic skills, as such competencies depend on explicit modelling, continuous practice, and clearly defined assessment criteria. When curricular guidance remains implicit, responsibility is effectively transferred to individual teachers to determine how, when, and to what extent paraphrasing is addressed. While teacher autonomy is a well-established feature of professional practice, teacher cognition research demonstrates that instructional decisions are shaped not only by policy documents but also by teachers’ beliefs, prior experiences, and professional judgement (Borg, 2006; Fives & Buehl, 2010). Consequently, variations in teachers’ understanding of paraphrasing may translate into uneven instructional practices. In the absence of explicit curricular direction, individual interpretations may therefore become decisive in determining whether paraphrasing is taught systematically, introduced at an early stage, and assessed consistently (Brude & Öhman Ekman, 2021; Davies, 2012). This raises questions about equity and coherence in the development of source-based writing skills across educational contexts.

Clearer instructional and assessment signals in steering documents may therefore be important for strengthening paraphrasing as a visible and teachable academic skill, while still preserving the professional autonomy that characterises Swedish education. In this light, the role of AI becomes particularly significant. The findings suggest that AI has intensified existing curricular ambiguity, making the implicitness of paraphrasing more pedagogically consequential than before.

AI-Based Tools and the Changing Conditions for Paraphrasing (RQ3)

AI-based tools were perceived as reshaping paraphrasing instruction by both enabling classroom support and creating new risks for learning and assessment validity. On the one hand, AI was positioned as an efficient instructional resource that can provide examples, support lesson preparation, and assist teacher modelling of the writing process and referencing. This aligns with research suggesting that AI tools can function as supportive learning resources when used as supplementary aids rather than replacements for cognitive work (Marzuki et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025; Triana et al., 2025).

On the other hand, AI was repeatedly associated with reduced student engagement, shortcut-oriented writing, and increased difficulty in assessing students’ independent language ability. This concern mirrors broader debates about academic integrity and the challenge of distinguishing genuine learner production from tool-created language. Within this context, paraphrasing was framed as becoming even more necessary, since it represents a visible form of comprehension-based production that supports critical thinking and ownership of meaning.

At the same time, the presence of AI challenges the traditional assumption that linguistic reformulation necessarily reflects cognitive processing. Paraphrasing thus shifts from being a straightforward marker of understanding to becoming a site where authenticity and authorship must be actively verified.

The findings indicate that the increased use of AI also pushes teachers to adjust assessment practices toward more controlled and process-oriented classroom tasks, including in-class writing and oral components to maintain assessment credibility. Similar concerns are reflected in research showing that AI-supported writing may create risks such as shortcut-oriented writing habits, weaker learner ownership, and difficulty identifying what is genuinely student-produced (Doye, 2013; Marzuki et al., 2023). Student-focused findings also suggest that AI-integrated paraphrasing tools can be time-saving and helpful, but that they may lead to dependency and loss of meaning if used uncritically, meaning that careful reviewing and editing are still necessary (Fitria, 2025; Malon et al., 2024).

These patterns suggest that AI does not remove the relevance of paraphrasing but instead intensifies its pedagogical significance. Paraphrasing becomes simultaneously more essential as a learning strategy and more difficult to assess reliably without adapted assessment designs.

Finally, the future status of paraphrasing was framed as uncertain but not necessarily disappearing. While concerns were raised about paraphrasing losing value as an assessment marker, paraphrasing was also positioned as becoming more important as a human academic skill that reflects meaning-making, ownership, and critical transformation of sources (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Pecorari, 2008). In this way, AI appears to intensify the need for explicit instruction and valid assessment designs that prioritise comprehension-driven reformulation rather than output-only performance (Escudero et al., 2019).

In the present study, participants' professional experience, judgement and individual initiative shaped their integration of paraphrasing into their lessons, resulting in varied instructional approaches (Carrasco, 2021). Within the Swedish education system, teachers hold responsibility for determining lesson content and materials (Skolverket, 2022; Skolverket, 2024). As the curriculum is very general in formulation, instructional decisions on what, how, and why to teach are guided by teachers' experiences, interests, and professional beliefs (Davies, 2012; Jeppsson, 2023; Larsen, 2025). While this autonomy reflects democratic educational values, it may also result in divergent learning experiences for students. Consequently, the provision of clear guidance on paraphrasing in policy documents

could contribute to greater consistency across schools but still preserving pedagogical flexibility (Davies, 2012).

Participants also shared common expectations regarding necessary curricular and policy changes. They highlighted that paraphrasing should be explicitly specified so that all English teachers place equal emphasis on this strategy in reading comprehension and academic writing instruction. Participants argued that formal recognition and systematic implementation would expand students' lexical and syntactic repertoires, foster confidence, and support long-term academic development (Escudero et al., 2019; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Nirwana, 2020). Several participants advocated for earlier introduction of paraphrasing to establish enduring study habits. Recommendations also included professional training for less experienced teachers, collegial collaboration, and the organisation of workshops and hands-on activities. Additionally, participants underlined the value of collecting and structuring material for both teachers and students to support effective implementation.

Ultimately, the findings in the present study support and extend existing research by demonstrating that participants perceive paraphrasing as a cognitively demanding, ethically important, and pedagogically fundamental strategy (Borg, 2006; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Pecorari, 2008). Their perspectives affirm that paraphrasing functions not only as a bridge between reading and writing (Hirvela, 2004; Shanahan, 1988), but also as a focal point where curricular ambiguity, teacher autonomy, and technological development intersect within contemporary English language education.

Implications and Limitations

Implications

The findings of the present study indicate several significant implications for the educational system, curriculum policy, and academic support for academic literacy education in Swedish upper secondary school preparatory programmes. Participants' common perception of paraphrasing as a primary indicator of deep understanding and academic literacy emphasises the continued educational importance of the skill (Hirvela, 2004), especially in students' preparation for higher education (Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021; Coffin et al., 2003). Despite rapid technological developments and shifts in the assessment practices, paraphrasing remains an essential tool for promoting students' comprehension, cognitive involvement with texts, and ethical use of sources (Doye, 2013; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2019). This highlights the theoretical positioning of paraphrasing as a cognitive link between reading and writing (Shanahan, 1988) and as an essential component of knowledge development, rather than as a form of superficial language manipulation.

The findings also contribute to ongoing theoretical debates regarding academic literacy in the era of AI (Hellman, 2024; Hirvela & Du, 2013). Participants' varied perspectives on AI-based tools demonstrate that paraphrasing is not merely a linguistic strategy, but also an ethical and instructional skill (Triana et al., 2025). Changes in classroom practices (Borg, 2006; Carrasco, 2021)—such as the increased use of in-class, oral and process-oriented assessments—suggest that paraphrasing is not an outdated technique, but one that continues to promote authentic learning (Fitria, 2024). From this perspective, paraphrasing instruction needs to readjust to technological developments by foregrounding cognitive engagement and original source use (Hungwe, 2019), rather than being perceived as a traditional or declining strategy (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Limitations

Although the present study provides constructive insights into English teachers' perspectives, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that restrict the scope of the research. First, the small sample of six participants limits the generalizability of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Brinkmann, 2014). Despite variations in participants' teaching experience and school contexts, the results cannot be assumed to represent the views of all Swedish upper secondary school teachers.

Second, the study focused entirely on self-reported beliefs and perceptions regarding paraphrasing (Patton, 2015). Consequently, it does not include direct investigation of classroom practices, teaching materials, or students' perspectives, which could have offered a more comprehensive account of how paraphrasing is implemented in practice (Borg, 2006; Calderhead, 1989). Participants' responses may therefore reflect intended or idealised practices rather than those consistently enacted in the classroom (Fives & Buehl, 2010).

Third, curricular ambiguity and degree of teacher autonomy characteristic of Swedish upper secondary preparatory programmes may limit the transferability of the findings to educational systems with more explicit curricular instructions or standardised assessment frameworks (Davies, 2012; Jeppsson, 2023).

Finally, the study examined the impact of AI-based tools on paraphrasing instruction from participants' perspectives. As AI technologies are rapidly advancing, participants' perceptions may change over time; therefore, the findings related to AI should be understood as capturing perspectives at a specific moment within a continuous pedagogical development (Fitria, 2025; Marzuki et al., 2023).

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study may serve as an initial step for further research, in which the sample of participants is expanded both geographically and numerically, allowing future findings to better reflect national trends (Alsäter, 2021; Patton, 2015). Incorporating students' perspectives would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences with paraphrasing instruction (Chi & Nguyen, 2017; Hungwe, 2019) and their strategies for dealing with challenges posed by AI-based tools (Nguyen et al., 2025; Triana et al., 2025).

Future empirical or multivariate studies could examine instructional approaches to paraphrasing in greater detail, including task design, feedback practices, and assessment procedures (Jumalon, 2023; Tran, 2024). Such research could help bridge potential gaps between teachers' stated beliefs and actual classroom practices (Borg, 2006; Fives & Buehl, 2010).

Additionally, more in-depth studies could closely analyse curriculum development and policy documents by examining references to paraphrasing in formal review reports and national examination criteria (Premat, 2023), as well as teachers' engagement with steering documents (Brude & Öhman Ekman, 2021; Larsen, 2025). This could offer greater insight into how policy ambiguity shapes instructional decision-making (Alsäter, 2021; Jeppsson, 2023).

Finally, longitudinal research would be particularly valuable (Cresswell, 2013) in exploring how paraphrasing instruction evolves alongside the integration of AI in education (Marzuki et al., 2023; Triana et al., 2025). In line with participants' predictions in the present study, such research could investigate how the increased use of AI-detection tools influences students' engagement with manual paraphrasing and the future role of academic literacy skills (Fitria, 2024; Hellman, 2024).

Conclusion

The main aim of the present study was to examine English teachers' perspectives on the role and importance of paraphrasing in reading comprehension and academic writing lessons in Swedish upper secondary school preparatory programmes, and how their insights align with Swedish steering documents. The findings show that the participants in the study view paraphrasing as a central academic literacy skill and an indicator of deeper understanding, particularly in relation to source-based writing and students' ability to express meaning independently. Participants also perceived paraphrasing as underspecified in the steering documents, since the term itself is not explicitly stated, even though related expectations appear indirectly through broader wording. As a result, paraphrasing instruction was described as relying largely on participants' professional judgement, experience, and interpretation of curricular goals.

In addition, AI-based tools were experienced as changing the conditions for paraphrasing instruction and assessment. Participants described AI as both a useful support for modelling and lesson preparation, and a challenge for maintaining academic integrity and assessment validity. In response to these concerns, participants reported increased attention to in-class and process-oriented assessment practices, aimed at ensuring that students performance reflects independent language ability and comprehension.

Overall, the findings point to a gap between the academic literacy demands associated with preparatory programmes and the limited explicit guidance provided for paraphrasing as a teachable and assessable strategy. Clearer wording in steering documents could support a more shared understanding of paraphrasing across schools, without limiting teacher autonomy, which remains a key principle in Swedish education and professional judgement (Skolverket, 2025). Based on participants' accounts, the study indicates a need to:

- introduce paraphrasing earlier in secondary education so that students can develop comprehension-based source use and ethical study habits before entering higher education;
- provide clearer guidance and examples for paraphrasing instruction, such as commentary materials or structured units, to support less experienced teachers and ensure consistency across contexts;
- provide professional support through collegial discussions, hands-on workshops, and shared teaching resources that help teachers exchange practices and respond to challenges of AI in assessment and instruction.

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Appendix A

Reading and Writing Components: Gy22 vs. Gy25

Table 3

Reading and Writing Components: Gy22 vs. Gy25

Gy	English Syllabus Gy22	English Syllabus Gy25
Courses	English 5 (CERF: grade E - B1.2)	English 1 (CERF: grade E - B1.2)
Codes	ENGENG05	ENGE100X
Core Content	Teaching in the course should cover the following core content:	The course teaching will cover the following core content:
Reception	<p>Texts that instruct, relate, summarise, explain, discuss, report and argue, via media.</p> <p>Literature and other fiction.</p> <p>Texts of different kinds and for different purposes, such as manuals, popular science texts and reports.</p> <p>Strategies for reading in different ways and for different purposes.</p> <p>Different ways of searching for, selecting and evaluating texts.</p> <p>How words and phrases in written communications create structure and context by clarifying introduction, causal connection, time aspects, and conclusions.</p>	<p>Texts, including texts of a less complex nature, from various media.</p> <p>Texts that are narrative, explanatory, discursive, argumentative and reporting, for example reports, manuals and simpler popular science texts.</p> <p>Fiction and other non-fiction.</p> <p>Strategies for perceiving details and drawing conclusions about content and messages, for example by associating, retelling, anticipating content and asking questions.</p> <p>Searching for content in sources of different types and for different purposes. Evaluating the relevance and credibility of the sources.</p> <p>How variation and adaptation to purpose, recipient and context, in the English that students encounter, is created through sentence structure, words, phrases and collocations.</p> <p>How structure and context, in the English that students encounter, are created through words and phrases that mark, for example, causality, contrast, the speaker's attitude, tense aspect and conclusion.</p>
Production and Interaction	<p>Written production of various kinds, also in more formal settings, where students instruct, narrate, summarise, explain, comment, assess, give reasons for their opinions, discuss and argue.</p> <p>Strategies for contributing to and actively participating in discussions related to societal life.</p> <p>Processing of their own and others' written communications in order to vary, clarify and specify, as well as to create structure and adapt these to their purpose and situation. This covers the use of words and phrases that clarify</p>	<p>Linguistic confidence in students' own production. How to express oneself coherently and with variety, clarity, structure, fluency and basic adaptation to purpose, recipient and context. Vocabulary, spelling and grammatical structures, sentence structure and text cohesion.</p> <p>Written production and interaction of various kinds, in informal and somewhat formal contexts, where students narrate, summarize, explain, justify their opinions, evaluate and discuss.</p> <p>How to distinguish between a source's content and one's own thoughts in one's own production and interaction.</p> <p>Strategies for contributing to written interaction related to social and working life, for example</p>

	causal connections and time aspects.	by asking follow-up questions, rephrasing, explaining and contributing new perspectives. Processing of own written submissions.
Courses	English 6 (CERF: Grade E - B2.1)	English 1 (CERF: Grade E - B2.1)
Codes	ENGENG06	ENGE2000X
Reception	<p>Texts, including complex and formal texts, which relate, discuss, argue, report and provide descriptions, also via media.</p> <p>Contemporary and older literature.</p> <p>Texts of different kinds and for different purposes, such as formal letters, popular science texts and reviews.</p> <p>Strategies for source-critical approaches when reading communications from different sources and in different media.</p> <p>Strategies to search for relevant information in larger amounts of text and to understand perspectives and implied meaning.</p> <p>How structure and context are built up and how attitudes, perspectives and style are expressed in written language in various genres.</p>	<p>Texts, even of a relatively complex and formal nature, from various media.</p> <p>Texts that are narrative, discussional, argumentative, reporting and expository, for example lectures, debates, formal letters and popular science texts.</p> <p>Fiction, contemporary and excerpts from older works.</p> <p>How attitudes, perspectives and style levels are expressed.</p> <p>Strategies for drawing conclusions about purpose, perspective and implied meaning, even in larger amounts of text, for example by taking notes, and identifying main messages.</p> <p>Evaluation of the relevance and reliability of sources of different types and for different purposes.</p> <p>How variation and adaptation to purpose, recipient and context, in the English that students encounter, is created through sentence structure, word formation and word choice, in informal and formal contexts.</p> <p>How structure and context, in the English that students encounter, are created through conjunction markers that express, for example, causality and comparison.</p> <p>How written English is structured to influence an intended target group.</p>
Production and Interaction	<p>Written production and interaction in different situations and for different purposes where students argue, report, apply, reason, summarise, comment on, assess and give reasons for their views.</p> <p>Strategies for contributing to and actively participating in argumentation, debates and discussions related to societal life.</p> <p>Different ways of commenting on and taking notes reading communications from different sources.</p> <p>Processing of language and structure in their own and others' written communications, and also in formal contexts.</p> <p>Adaptation to genre, situation and purpose.</p>	<p>Linguistic confidence in students' own production and interaction. How to express oneself in a nuanced manner and with variation, clarity, structure, fluency and adaptation to purpose, recipient and context.</p> <p>vocabulary, spelling, grammatical structures and sentence structures as well as text cohesion and paragraph division in students' own production and interaction.</p> <p>Written production and interaction with different purposes, in informal and somewhat formal contexts, where students reason, argue, apply and synthesize content from different written sources.</p> <p>Strategies for contributing to and actively participating in arguments and discussions related to social life, for example by explaining, contributing to new perspectives and linking to the contributions of others.</p> <p>Processing of own written submissions.</p>

Courses	English 7 (CERF: grade E - B2.2)	English 3 (CERF: grade E - B2.2)
Codes	ENGENG07	ENGE3000X
Reception	<p>Texts, including complex and formal texts which relate, discuss, argue, report, describe and investigate, also via film and other media.</p> <p>Contemporary and older literature and other fiction in various genres.</p> <p>Texts of different kinds and for different purposes, such as agreements, in-depth articles and scientific texts.</p> <p>Strategies to take in and structure information in larger amounts of text.</p> <p>Strategies for drawing conclusions about texts in terms of attitudes, perspectives, purposes and values, and to understand implied meaning.</p> <p>How written communications in different genres are built up.</p> <p>How stylistics and rhetorical devices are used for different purposes and how language is used as an instrument to exercise power.</p>	<p>Texts, even of a complex and formal nature, from various media.</p> <p>Texts that are narrative, discussional, argumentative, expository and investigative, for example debates, lectures, contract texts and texts used in higher studies.</p> <p>Contemporary and older fiction in various genres.</p> <p>Implied meaning in the texts that students encounter.</p> <p>Strategies for overviewing and structuring content from larger amounts of text, for example by sorting, visualizing, summarizing and identifying the underlying content.</p> <p>Evaluation of the usefulness of sources of different types and for different purposes.</p> <p>How variation and adaptation to purpose, recipient and context is created through complex sentence structure, word formation and style level.</p> <p>How structure and context are created through conjunction markers, effective paragraph division, thesis and core sentences.</p> <p>How stylistic and rhetorical techniques are used for different purposes and how language is used as a means of power.</p>
Production and Interaction	<p>Written production and interaction in different situations and for different purposes where students argue from different perspectives, apply, reason, assess, investigate, negotiate and give reasons for their views.</p> <p>Written communications in a chosen specialisation area.</p> <p>Strategies for using different types of sources, with source-critical awareness and established ways of citing sources within the chosen specialisation area and in other areas.</p> <p>Strategies and modern technology to participate in, lead and document written communications in various media, such as in negotiation situations related to social life.</p> <p>Use of basic stylistic and rhetorical concepts.</p>	<p>Linguistic confidence in students' own production and interaction. How to express oneself in a nuanced and well-structured manner, with variation, clarity, fluency, precision and flexibility, taking into account purpose, recipient and context. Vocabulary, spelling, grammatical structures and sentence structures, as well as text cohesion and paragraph division in students' own production and interaction.</p> <p>Written production and interaction with different purposes, in informal and formal contexts, where students reason from different perspectives, argue, investigate, apply and negotiate.</p> <p>Written presentation within an area of specialization.</p> <p>Use of different types of sources, with critical awareness of sources and accepted ways of citing sources, within the chosen field of specialization and within other areas.</p> <p>Strategies for explaining, summarizing and linking to the contributions of others.</p> <p>Use of basic stylistic and rhetorical devices.</p>

Note. Adapted from Skolverket (2022) and Skolverket (2024).

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Background and Knowledge

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. How would you define paraphrasing?
3. When did you learn this strategy: in high school or at university?

Experience and Perceptions

4. How much importance have you given to paraphrasing in your reading comprehension and academic writing lessons?
5. What do you believe is the role of paraphrasing in English language learning: especially in reading comprehension and academic writing?
6. How important do you think paraphrasing is for students' academic and critical thinking skills?
7. Do you think that paraphrasing is more challenging for students learning English as a second language? Why or why not?

Instructional Approaches

8. What methods or strategies do you use to teach paraphrasing?
9. How do you assess students' ability to paraphrase effectively?
10. Do you use any specific tools (e.g., online corpora, AI-based tools, academic databases) to support paraphrasing instruction?
11. How do you help students differentiate between effective paraphrasing and plagiarism?

Challenges in Teaching and Learning Paraphrasing

12. What are the most common difficulties students face when learning to paraphrase?
13. Do you think that students struggle more with paraphrasing due to language proficiency issues or a lack of reading comprehension and academic writing skills?

Policy Documents and Curriculum Objectives

14. How do Swedish policy documents or curriculum guidelines influence your approach to teaching paraphrasing?
15. Do you believe the current curriculum places enough emphasis on paraphrasing skills? Why or why not?
16. Are there institutional expectations or objectives that impact how paraphrasing is taught in preparatory programmes?

Future-oriented Expectations

17. How do you think teaching paraphrasing will evolve in the future, especially with the increasing use of AI-based language tools?
18. What recommendations would you give for improving paraphrasing instruction in upper secondary school preparatory programmes in Sweden?

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

Title of Study: EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Paraphrasing at
Upper-Secondary Schools in Sweden

Researcher Name: Dzhanan Fahri Aygyor

Institution: Malmö University

Contact Information: ctekulus@hotmail.com

Purpose of the Interview

You are invited to participate in an interview as part of a research study on teachers' perspectives regarding the use of paraphrasing as a learning strategy in English reading comprehension and writing lessons in Swedish upper-secondary school preparatory programmes. The purpose of this interview is to gather your insights on the use of paraphrasing in your English reading and writing lessons, its applicability and preference in classroom practice, the support provided by the Swedish school curriculum for such strategies, the role of paraphrasing in future teaching, and any recommendations for improving its instruction.

Procedure

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or withdraw at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality

Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used exclusively for research purposes. Any identifying information will be anonymized the legal basis for data collection is consent, in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

Recording and Use of Data

- The interview will be recorded.
- The data collected will be used for academic research.
- You have the right to review or request the deletion of your responses

Consent Statement

By signing below, you confirm that:

1. You have read and understood this consent form.
2. You voluntarily agree to participate.
3. You understand your rights, including confidentiality and withdrawal.

Participant's Name (Printed):

Participant's Signature:

Place & Date:

Researcher's Name (Printed):

Dzhanan Fahri Aygyor

Researcher's Signature:

Place & Date:

Appendix D

Email Sample to Administrative Staff

A Sample of the email addressed to administrative staff:

Dear Ms/Mr [surname],

My name is Dzhanan Aygyor, and I am a retired English teacher with 30 years of experience. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree at Malmö University and working on my thesis, for which I need to interview English teachers working in the preparatory programs at upper-secondary schools in Sweden.

The topic of the interview is the use of the **paraphrasing strategy** in reading comprehension and academic writing. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes, during which participants will answer 18 questions related to the topic. It will be conducted via Zoom at a time convenient for them.

I would sincerely appreciate the opportunity to conduct interviews with your English language instructors, as their insights would make a valuable contribution to my research and support the completion of my study on this topic. Their responses will remain anonymous and will be used exclusively for research purposes.

Best Regards,

Dzhanan Aygyor

P.S. In the attachment you can find my CV.

Email Sample to Teaching Staff

Hej, [first name]!

I have found your email address on your school's website.

My name is Dzhanan, and I am a retired English teacher with 30 years of experience. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree at Malmö University and working on my thesis, for which I need to interview English teachers working in the preparatory programs at upper-secondary schools in Sweden.

The topic of the interview is the use of the **paraphrasing strategy** in reading comprehension and academic writing. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes, during which participants will answer 18 questions related to the topic. It will be conducted via Zoom at a time convenient for you.

The responses will remain anonymous and will be used exclusively for research purposes.

I would be very grateful if you could take part in my research and help me complete my study on this subject.

Best Regards,

Dzhanan

P.S. Can you reply to me even if you do not want to participate? 🙏

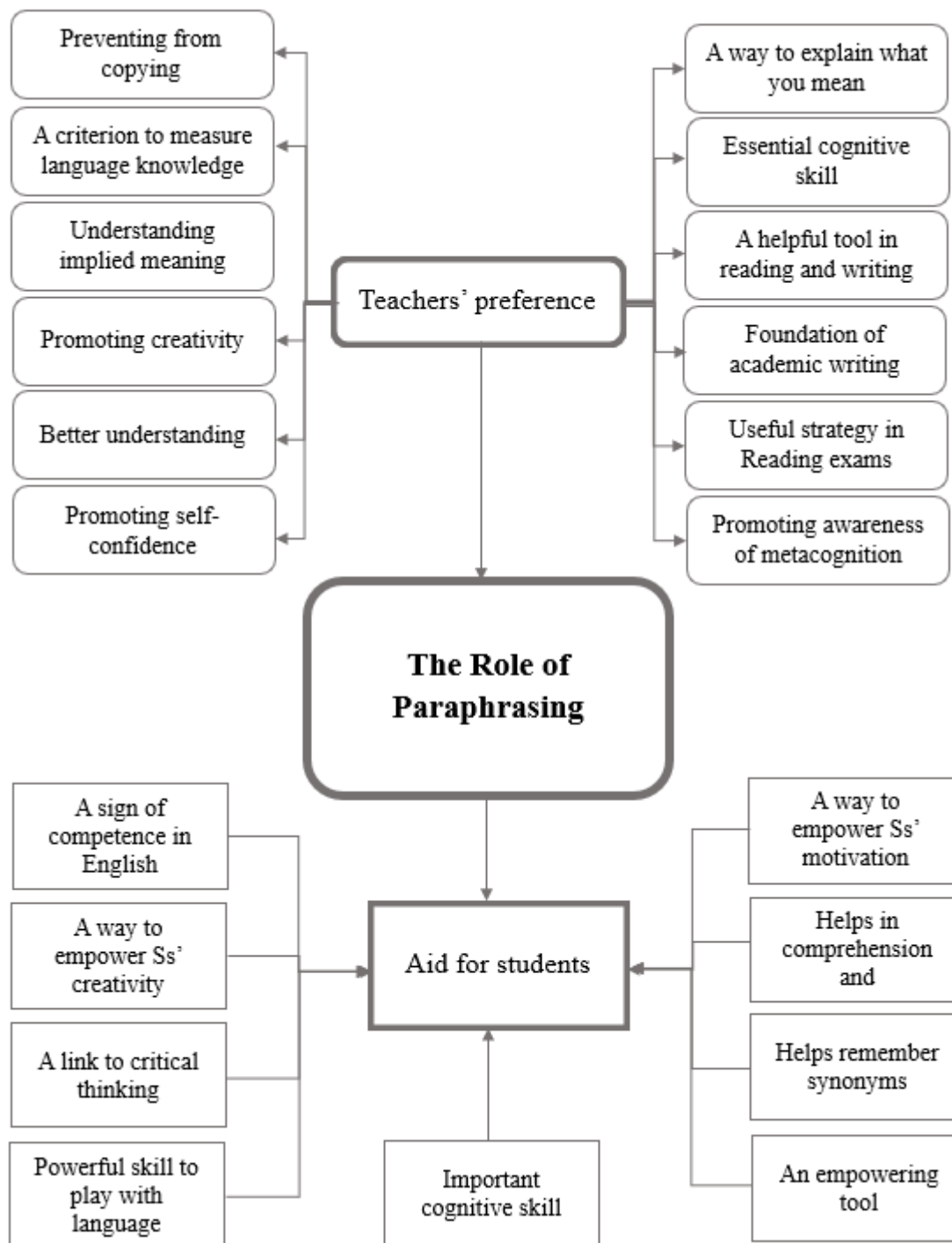
Also, in the attachment you can find my CV.

Appendix F

Themes

Figure F1

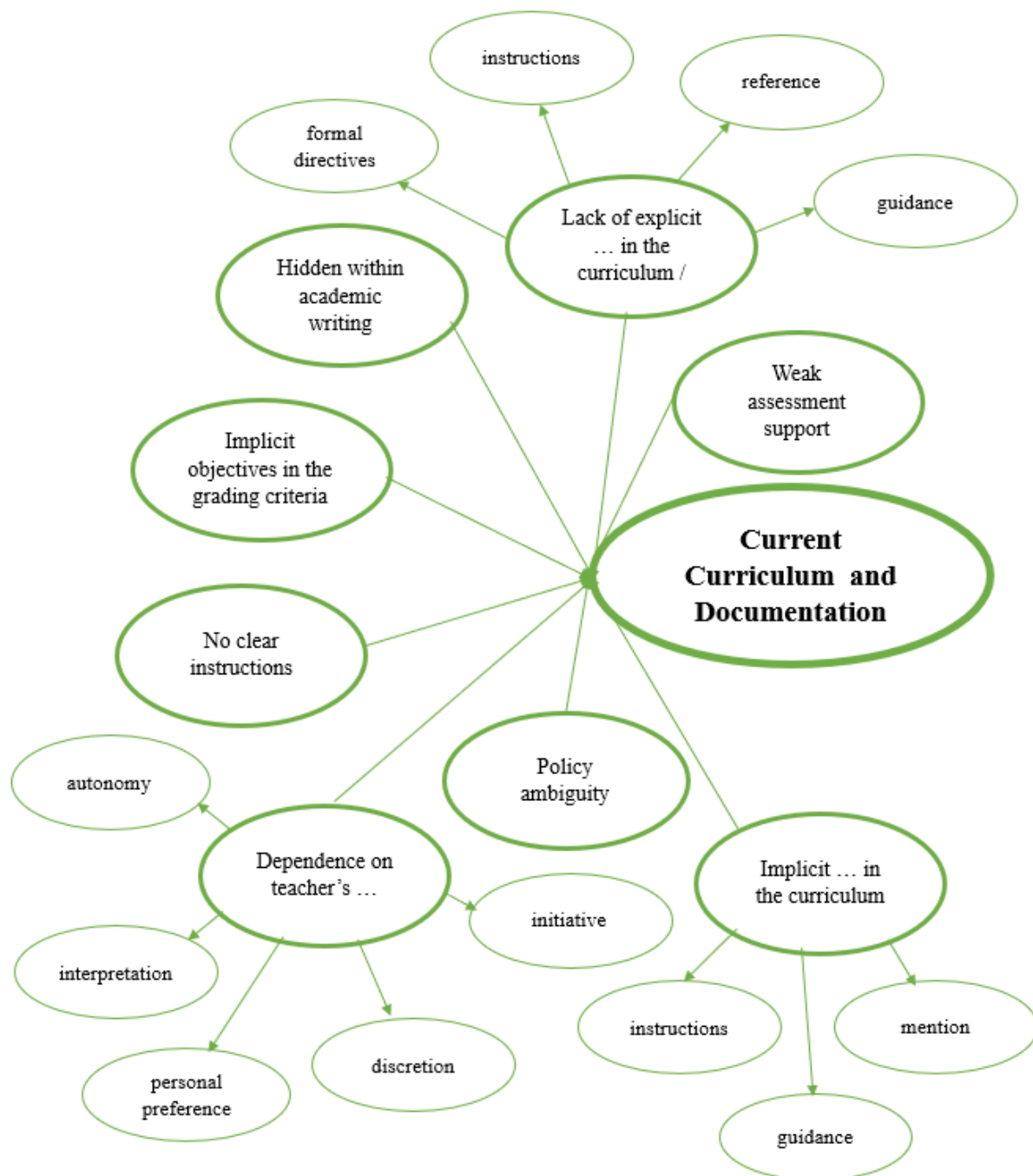
Thematic Representation of Participants' Perceptions of the Role of Paraphrasing



Note. The figure visually represents the subthemes and categories identified within Theme 1 of the thematic analysis.

Figure F2

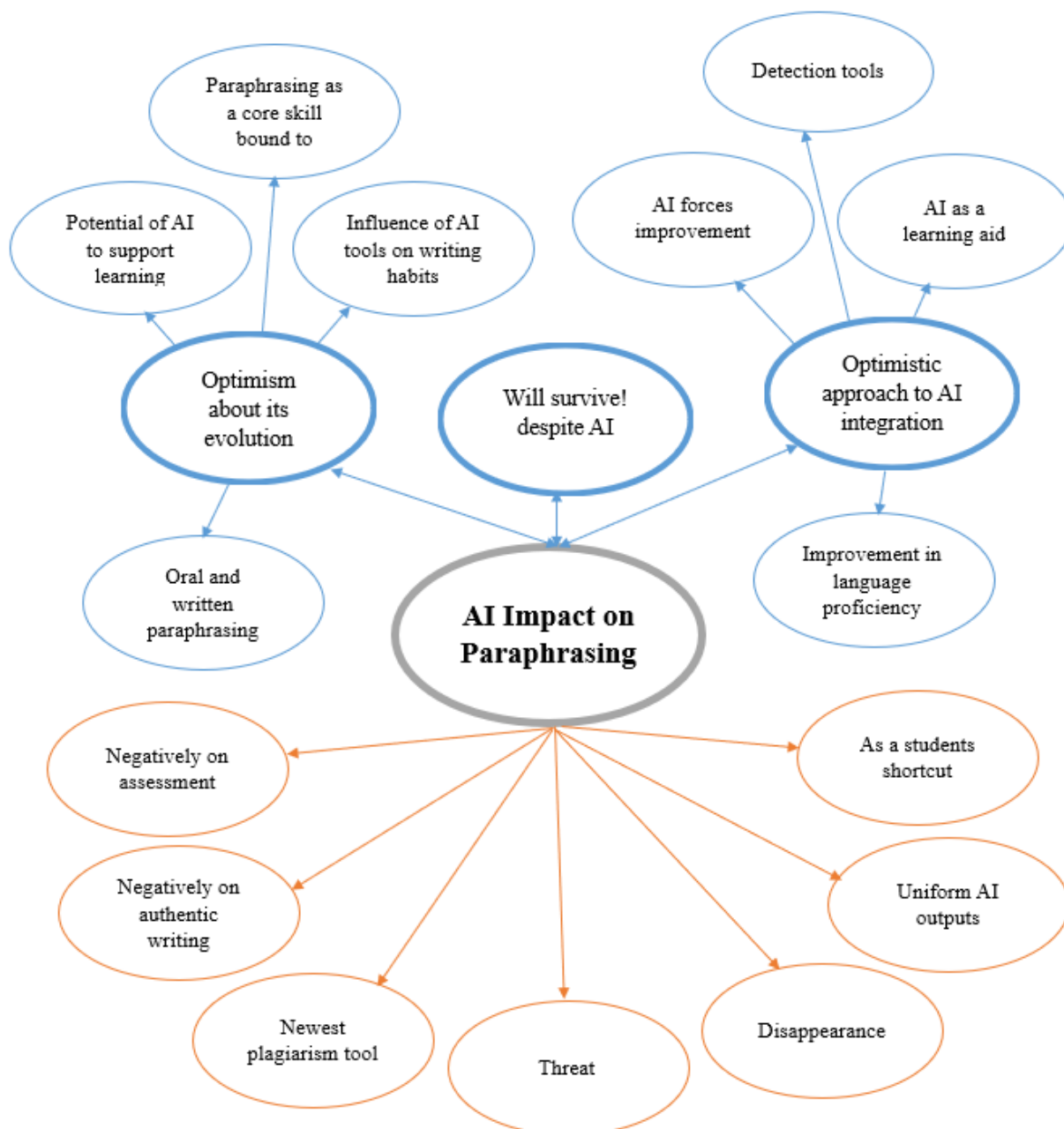
Thematic Representation of Participants' Perceptions of Paraphrasing within Swedish Steering Documents



Note. The figure visually represents the subthemes and categories identified within Theme 2 of the thematic analysis.

Figure F3

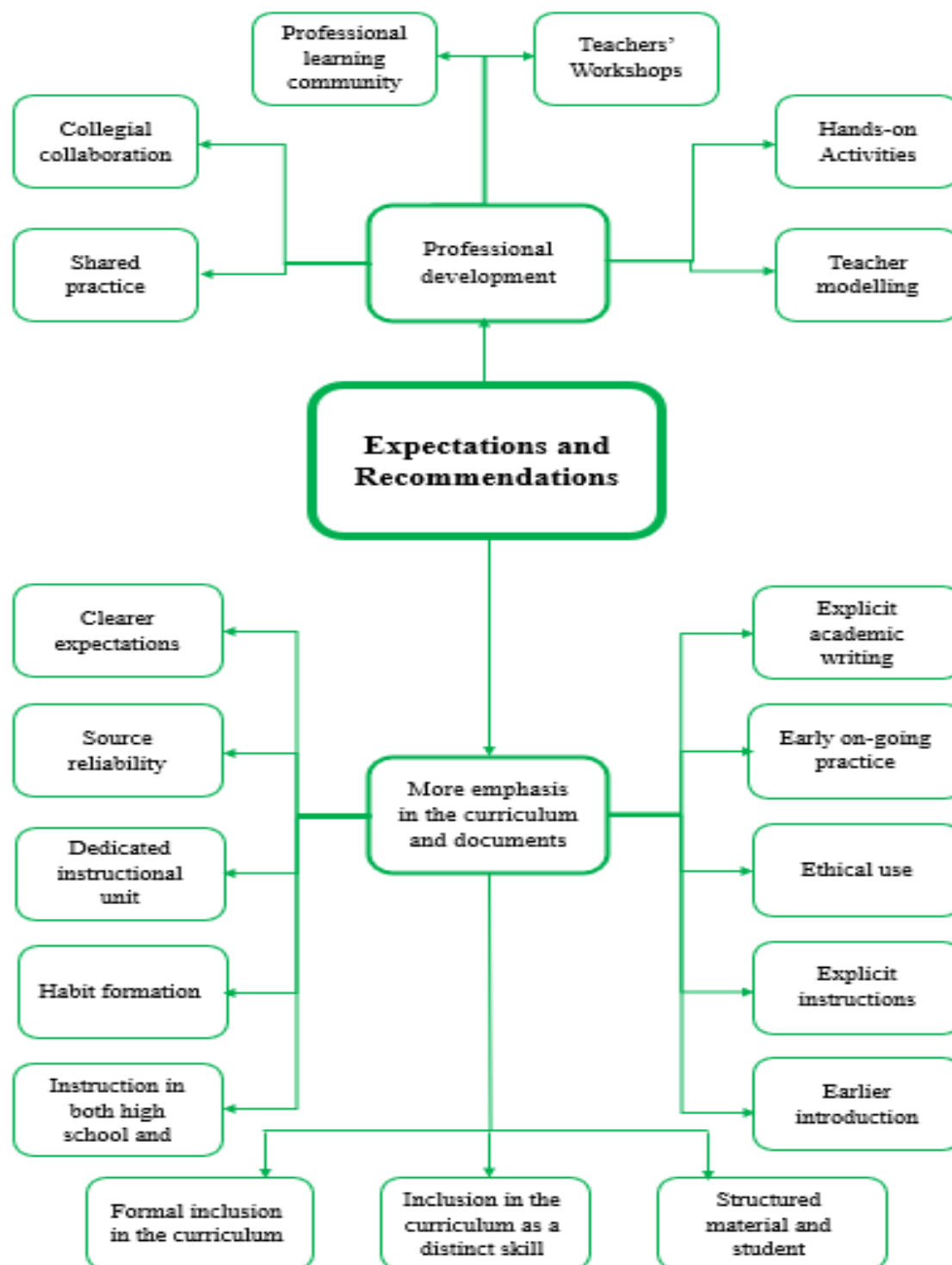
Thematic Representation of Participants' Perceptions of AI's Impact on Paraphrasing



Note. The figure visually represents the subthemes and categories identified within Theme 3 of the thematic analysis.

Figure F4

Thematic Representation of Participants' Expectations and Recommendations for Paraphrasing Instruction



Note. The figure visually represents the subthemes and categories identified within Theme 4 of the thematic analysis.