

From Anxiety to Artistry: Evaluating the Impact of a Specialised Guest Lecturer Webinar on Students' Perceived Paraphrasing Competencies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of a Guest Lecturer Talk webinar on students' perceived paraphrasing abilities at a local university in Malaysia. Using a pre-post survey design, data were collected from undergraduate students across multiple classes and lecturers. A survey instrument measured several constructs, including understanding, interest, motivation, perceived importance, self-assessed ability, and interest in attending expert-led webinars before and after the intervention. Statistical analyses revealed significant improvements across all measured constructs, with medium-to-large effect sizes. The overall composite mean demonstrated substantial gains, although the absence of a control group renders causal claims provisional. Furthermore, internal consistency across all scales was excellent. Results indicated no significant differences in learning gains among different lecturers' classes, suggesting the intervention was equitably effective across various instructional contexts. Participants rated the guest speaker and webinar quality highly, with speaker quality strongly correlating with overall webinar satisfaction. Ultimately, these findings, based on self-reported data, support incorporating expert-led webinars into academic writing curricula as a cost-effective and scalable complement to traditional classroom instruction, while highlighting the need for objective performance measures and longitudinal follow-up in future evaluations.

Keywords: perceived paraphrasing skills; webinar; academic writing; guest lecturer; pre-post design; ESL; Malaysian higher education

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a critical competency for undergraduate students, with paraphrasing constituting one of its most demanding sub-skills. The ability to accurately reformulate ideas from source texts, without resorting to plagiarism, is essential for scholarly integrity and communication (Keck, 2014; Shi, 2012). Despite its importance, paraphrasing remains a persistent area of difficulty for many students, particularly those in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts (Yamada, 2003). Students frequently rely on near-verbatim copying or mechanical substitution strategies that do not adequately demonstrate comprehension of source material (Keck, 2014; Shi, 2012).

In response to these challenges, institutions have increasingly experimented with supplementary interventions to strengthen academic writing skills. One such approach involves the use of guest lecturer webinars; wherein external experts are invited to deliver targeted instruction on specific academic skills. The webinar format offers

notable advantages: it transcends physical classroom boundaries, accommodates large audiences at low marginal cost, and can leverage the credibility and novelty of external expertise to heighten student engagement (Bower, 2011; Wang & Woo, 2007). In the Malaysian context, the rapid normalisation of open and distance learning (ODL) since the COVID-19 pandemic has made students broadly accustomed to receiving instruction through synchronous online channels, with prior research indicating that Malaysian undergraduates can engage productively with English language instruction delivered via ODL regardless of the device used to access it (Shanthi et al., 2023).

The local university has integrated Guest Lecturer Talks (GCT) into its academic programme structure. These webinars bring subject-matter experts into the student learning experience to bridge theory and practice. However, the empirical evidence for the effectiveness of single-session webinar interventions on discrete academic writing sub-skills, such as paraphrasing, remains limited, particularly in Malaysian higher education. Much of the existing webinar literature evaluates satisfaction or general engagement rather than skill-specific competency beliefs, and few studies test whether gains are distributed equitably across instructional groups within an institution.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the impact of a GCT webinar focused on paraphrasing skills on students' self-reported competencies across six constructs: understanding, interest, motivation, perceived importance, self-assessed ability, and interest in expert-led webinars. A quantitative pre-post survey design was employed with a large sample of students drawn from multiple classes and lecturers. The study also evaluates the perceived quality of the speaker and webinar delivery and examines whether gains were consistent across different instructional contexts.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. Did the GCT webinar produce statistically significant improvements in students' perceived paraphrasing abilities?

RQ2. How reliable are the survey scales used to measure paraphrasing competency constructs?

RQ3. Were there significant differences in learning gains across students from different lecturers' classes?

RQ4. How did students evaluate the quality of the guest speaker and the webinar overall?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Paraphrasing in Academic Writing

Paraphrasing is a critical skill for academic writing that prevents plagiarism and enhances writing quality, though students often struggle with its execution, paraphrasing is widely recognised as a higher-order literacy skill that requires students to comprehend, interpret, and restate information from source texts in their own words (Hirvela & Du, 2013).

Unlike summarising, which condenses information, effective paraphrasing demands both linguistic dexterity and deep conceptual understanding (Shi, 2012). A study conducted by Mariani et al., (2021) showed that using synonyms and condensing original were as the most frequency, followed by using varied structure, changing parts of speech and expanding phrase for clarity. On the other hand, students rarely used changing word order, separating long sentence, and combining sentences.

For ESL students, the difficulty is compounded by limited vocabulary repertoire, incomplete command of grammatical structures, and educational traditions that may privilege faithful reproduction of authoritative sources over original expression (Flowerdew & Li, 2007). The consequence is a well-documented reliance on

“patchwriting”: minimally modified copying that occupies an uneasy middle ground between legitimate paraphrase and plagiarism (Keck, 2014).

Research consistently demonstrates that explicit instruction in paraphrasing strategies significantly improves students’ performance compared to incidental learning alone (Keck, 2014; Yamada, 2003). Notably, interventions that incorporate authentic expert modelling, where students observe how professionals engage with and restate complex texts, have been found to produce more durable learning outcomes (Hirvela & Du, 2013). Importantly, however, much of this evidence concerns sustained, course-embedded instruction; whether a single, concentrated expert-led session can shift students’ competency beliefs in the same direction remains an open empirical question, and one this study directly addresses.

Webinars and Synchronous Online Learning as Pedagogical Tools

Synchronous online learning environments, including webinars, have gained considerable traction in higher education, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic’s forced shift to remote instruction (Shanthi, et al., 2025). Webinars allow real-time interaction between learners and experts, combining the scalability of online content delivery with the immediacy and responsiveness of live instruction (Tengku Mahmood et al., 2023). Studies have found that webinar-based interventions can enhance student engagement, knowledge acquisition, and self-efficacy when they are well-structured and facilitated by credible presenters (Aliyah Hassan et al., 2023; Martin, 2005; Wang & Woo, 2007).

Within Malaysian higher education specifically, the infrastructure and student familiarity required for such interventions are now well established. Investigating English language learning via ODL among 304 Malaysian undergraduates, Shanthi et al. (2023) found that students’ satisfaction with online English instruction was significantly associated with their satisfaction with the technology used to access it, while the specific device (smartphone versus laptop) had no significant bearing on academic achievement. This suggests that access barriers to synchronous online interventions are low, and that the quality of the learning experience, rather than the delivery hardware, is the operative factor in students’ engagement with online English instruction. These findings strengthen the case for webinars as an equitable delivery mechanism in the Malaysian undergraduate context.

Guest lecturer formats specifically have been associated with increased student motivation and perceived relevance of course content, as students report that external experts lend greater authority and real-world applicability to abstract concepts (Crow & Smith, 2005). However, the effects of single-session webinars on specific, measurable academic skills remain understudied, particularly in the Malaysian context.

Self-Efficacy and Academic Writing Motivation

Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory posits that students’ beliefs in their own capabilities are a critical determinant of academic performance and persistence. In the context of academic writing, self-efficacy has been linked to students’ willingness to engage with challenging writing tasks, seek feedback, and produce higher-quality written products (Shanthi, et al., 2025). Interventions that successfully boost self-efficacy (through mastery experiences, vicarious observation, and verbal persuasion) are thus likely to yield downstream improvements in writing engagement beyond the immediate learning event. A guest expert webinar is theoretically well placed to activate two of these mechanisms: vicarious learning, as students observe an expert model the paraphrasing process, and verbal persuasion, as the expert frames paraphrasing as a learnable craft rather than an innate talent. The present study’s measurement of ability and motivation constructs may therefore be interpreted within this self-efficacy framework, with the caveat that self-reported competency beliefs are antecedents of performance rather than performance itself.

Multimodal and Technology-Mediated Language Learning in Malaysian Higher Education

A complementary strand of research examines how the design features of digital learning experiences shape language learning engagement. Examining Malaysian ESL learners' perceptions of short-form video, Xavierine et al. (2025) found that learners attribute vocabulary learning value to specific multimodal design features (the coordinated use of sound, on-screen text, visuals, and gesture) rather than to the digital medium per se. The implication for webinar design is direct: it is not the online format itself that drives learning gains, but the quality of the multimodal input the expert provides, including slide design, live demonstration, and verbal-visual coordination. This aligns with the present study's evaluation of speaker presentation quality and slide engagement (Part 4 of the instrument) as potential contributors to the intervention's effectiveness. It also situates the GCT webinar within a broader shift in Malaysian ESL pedagogy toward intentionally designed, technology-mediated input that meets learners on platforms and in formats they already navigate fluently (Shanthi et al., 2023; Xavierine et al., 2025).

Measuring Change Through Self-Report

Because this study relies on self-reported competencies, the measurement literature on pre-post self-assessment warrants brief acknowledgement. Self-report instruments administered immediately before and after an intervention are vulnerable to response-shift bias, whereby the intervention itself recalibrates the standard against which respondents judge their own ability (Howard, 1980). A student who rates their paraphrasing understanding as "4" before a webinar may discover during the session how much they did not know, deflating (or, in the case of confidence gains, inflating) the post-test metric independently of true skill change. Pre-post self-report designs therefore capture shifts in competency beliefs and attitudes with high sensitivity but should be interpreted as measuring perceived rather than demonstrated competence. This distinction frames both the contribution and the limitations of the present study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, single-group pre-post survey design. Data were collected via an online survey administered immediately before and after a GCT webinar on paraphrasing skills held on 13-14 November 2025. The pre-post design enables within-subject comparison of self-reported competencies, allowing assessment of the immediate attitudinal and perceived-ability shifts associated with the intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The absence of a control group is acknowledged as a design constraint and is addressed in the Limitations section.

Participants

A total of 364 valid responses were obtained from undergraduate students enrolled in English language courses at UiTM, Malaysia. Of the 364 participants, 212 (58.2%) were enrolled in Applied Management (AM) programmes and 152 (41.8%) in Computer Science (CS). By year of study, 198 (54.4%) were in their first year, 124 (34.1%) in their second year, and 42 (11.5%) in their third year or above. Female students comprised 247 (67.9%) of the sample, reflecting the broader gender distribution in UiTM's language course enrolments. Prior formal instruction in paraphrasing was reported by 143 participants (39.3%), while the remaining 221 (60.7%) indicated no dedicated prior instruction.

Instrument

The survey instrument comprised four substantive parts. Part 2 (six items) and Part 3 (six items) assessed identical constructs before and after the webinar respectively: (1) understanding of paraphrasing skills, (2) interest in paraphrasing exercises, (3) motivation to engage in paraphrasing, (4) perceived importance of paraphrasing in academic writing, (5) self-assessed ability to apply paraphrasing, and (6) interest in attending expert-led webinars. Part 4 (five items) evaluated the guest speaker on dimensions of clarity, subject knowledge, visual presentation quality, responsiveness to questions, and approachability. Part 5 (four items) assessed

webinar-level quality encompassing usefulness, organisation, technical execution, and moderator effectiveness. All items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). An open-ended item (Part 5.6) solicited qualitative feedback. [NOTE TO AUTHORS: If the instrument was adapted from or informed by existing scales, cite the sources; if researcher-developed, state whether it was piloted or face-validated.]

Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted using Python (version 3.12) with the pandas, scipy, numpy, and matplotlib libraries. Internal consistency was assessed via Cronbach's alpha. Paired-samples t-tests compared pre- and post-webinar scores for each construct, with Cohen's d computed on the paired differences as a standardised effect size measure. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined whether mean learning gains differed significantly across lecturer groups. Pearson product-moment correlations assessed associations among composite scores. A significance level of $\alpha = .05$ was adopted throughout.

RESULTS

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each multi-item scale (Table 1). All four scales demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha > .93$), confirming that the items within each scale reliably measure a common underlying construct. The pre-webinar scale attained the highest reliability estimate ($\alpha = .967$), and the post-webinar scale was similarly consistent ($\alpha = .942$).

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Pre-webinar (Part 2)	6	0.967	Excellent
Post-webinar (Part 3)	6	0.942	Excellent
Speaker Evaluation (Part 4)	5	0.959	Excellent
Webinar Evaluation (Part 5)	4	0.937	Excellent

Table 1. Internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for each scale.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for all six constructs are presented in Table 2. Pre-webinar means ranged from 3.52 to 3.83, indicating moderate baseline competency perceptions. Post-webinar means were uniformly higher, ranging from 4.33 to 4.44. The overall composite mean increased from 3.65 (SD = 1.07) to 4.38 (SD = 0.59), representing a mean gain of +0.73. Notably, the post-webinar standard deviations were roughly half their pre-webinar counterparts, indicating a marked compression of scores toward the upper end of the scale after the intervention, a pattern consistent with both genuine convergence in competency beliefs and a ceiling effect, addressed further in the Discussion.

Construct	Pre M	Pre SD	Post M	Post SD	Gain	n
Understanding	3.52	1.17	4.36	0.65	+0.84	364
Interest	3.61	1.18	4.37	0.67	+0.76	364
Motivation	3.66	1.18	4.39	0.65	+0.74	363
Importance	3.74	1.16	4.44	0.66	+0.70	364
Ability	3.54	1.17	4.33	0.68	+0.79	364

Webinar Interest	3.83	1.07	4.41	0.67	+0.58	363
Overall	3.65	1.07	4.38	0.59	+0.73	364

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for pre- and post-webinar constructs.

Pre-Post Comparison: Paired-Samples T-Tests

To address RQ1, paired-samples t-tests were conducted for each construct (Table 3). All six constructs showed statistically significant improvements following the webinar (all $p < .001$). Understanding demonstrated the largest effect ($d = 0.726$), followed by Ability ($d = 0.709$) and Interest ($d = 0.646$). Webinar Interest, which had the highest pre-webinar baseline ($M = 3.83$), nevertheless showed a significant and meaningful gain ($d = 0.563$). Cohen's d values ranged from 0.563 to 0.726, medium-to-large effects by conventional benchmarks (Cohen, 1988), with Understanding and Ability approaching the large-effect threshold. [NOTE TO AUTHORS: The original draft's Abstract and Discussion claimed d values up to 0.81 and "four constructs meeting the threshold for a large effect ($d > 0.80$)", which contradicts Table 3 (max $d = 0.726$, none > 0.80). The text has been aligned to the table throughout; please verify against the analysis output and correct whichever source is wrong.]

Construct	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)	Gain	t	p	d
Understanding	3.52 (1.17)	4.36 (0.65)	+0.84	13.853	$< .001$	0.726
Interest	3.61 (1.18)	4.37 (0.67)	+0.76	12.316	$< .001$	0.646
Motivation	3.66 (1.18)	4.39 (0.65)	+0.74	11.754	$< .001$	0.617
Importance	3.74 (1.16)	4.44 (0.66)	+0.70	11.331	$< .001$	0.594
Ability	3.54 (1.17)	4.33 (0.68)	+0.79	13.535	$< .001$	0.709
Webinar Interest	3.83 (1.07)	4.41 (0.67)	+0.58	10.720	$< .001$	0.563

Table 3. Paired-samples t-test results. All comparisons significant at $p < .001$. Cohen's d computed on paired differences. Absolute t values reported.

Regarding the distribution of individual gains, 182 students (50.0%) demonstrated positive learning gains, 150 (41.2%) showed no change, and 32 (8.8%) recorded a decrease in self-assessed scores. Students who entered the webinar with low baseline scores (1-2) consistently exhibited the largest post-webinar increases, suggesting that the intervention was particularly impactful for students with limited prior exposure or confidence. Conversely, the substantial proportion of students showing no change is largely attributable to those entering at or near the scale ceiling, who had little measurable room to improve. This ceiling effect suggests that a 5-point Likert scale may lack sufficient granularity to capture gains among initially confident students; future iterations should consider a 7-point scale or, ideally, supplement self-reports with objective paraphrasing tasks.

Group Differences: One-Way ANOVA

To address RQ3, a one-way ANOVA compared mean learning gains across the six most frequently represented lecturer groups ($n = 321$). Results indicated no statistically significant differences across groups, $F(5, 315) = 0.760$, $p = .579$. Group means ranged from 0.58 to 0.88 (Table 4), and the overlapping 95% confidence intervals corroborated the absence of a significant group effect. This finding suggests that the webinar produced broadly comparable gains regardless of which class or lecturer students were associated with, indicating a degree of equity in the intervention's reach.

Lecturer Group	n	Mean Gain	SD	95% CI
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Group A	88	0.881	1.172	[0.64, 1.13]
Group B	28	0.845	1.074	[0.45, 1.24]
Group C	67	0.823	1.034	[0.58, 1.07]
Group D	46	0.819	1.177	[0.48, 1.16]
Group E	38	0.632	0.853	[0.36, 0.90]
Group F	54	0.580	0.835	[0.36, 0.80]

Table 4. Mean learning gains by lecturer group. ANOVA: $F(5, 315) = 0.760$, $p = .579$, ns. [NOTE TO AUTHORS: Lecturer names have been anonymised to groups A-F. Publishing named lecturers alongside their classes' performance data raises ethical and consent issues, and one named lecturer is an author of this paper. Restore names only if explicit consent was obtained and the journal permits it.]

Speaker and Webinar Evaluation

To address RQ4, descriptive statistics were computed for speaker (Part 4) and webinar quality (Part 5) items (Table 5). The guest speaker received an overall composite mean of 4.62/5.00. Subject knowledge ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.57$) and approachability ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.58$) were the highest-rated dimensions. The webinar quality composite was likewise 4.62/5.00, with usefulness ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.60$) rated most favourably. All item means exceeded 4.5, indicating broad agreement that the session met a high standard.

Item	M	SD
Part 4 - Speaker Evaluation		
4.1 Clarity of presentation	4.59	0.61
4.2 Subject knowledge	4.65	0.57
4.3 Quality and engagement of slides	4.62	0.61
4.4 Responsiveness to questions	4.62	0.59
4.5 Friendliness and approachability	4.65	0.58
Part 5 - Webinar Evaluation		
5.1 Usefulness of the webinar	4.65	0.60
5.2 Organisation of the webinar	4.62	0.59
5.3 Technical aspects	4.59	0.60
5.4 Moderator clarity and navigation	4.62	0.59

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for speaker and webinar evaluation items

A brief thematic analysis of responses to the open-ended item respondents' comments, $n = 105$ revealed three recurring suggestions. First, a preference for daytime scheduling was expressed by 38% of commenters, who noted that evening sessions conflicted with other academic commitments. Second, 42% requested interactive elements such as live quizzes, polls, or breakout discussions. Third, 29% expressed a desire for face-to-face or hybrid components to complement the webinar format. Representative comments included: "The content was excellent, but please add quizzes to keep us engaged" and "Would be better if held in the afternoon – 8 pm is too late after classes." These themes align with prior research on webinar engagement (Bower et al., 2015) and will inform future iterations of the GCT programme.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations among composite variables are reported in Table 6. Speaker quality and webinar satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated ($r = .851$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who rated the speaker highly

also expressed greater satisfaction with the webinar as a whole. A moderate positive correlation was observed between post-webinar self-assessment scores and webinar satisfaction ($r = .666$, $p < .001$), suggesting that students who felt more competent post-webinar were also more satisfied with the event. Learning gain was weakly but significantly associated with webinar satisfaction ($r = .232$, $p < .001$), implying that while perceived growth contributed positively to satisfaction, structural and delivery factors played the dominant role.

Variable Pair	r	p	Strength
Speaker Evaluation × Webinar Satisfaction	0.851	< .001	Strong, positive
Post-Webinar Score × Webinar Satisfaction	0.666	< .001	Moderate, positive
Learning Gain × Webinar Satisfaction	0.232	< .001	Weak, positive

Table 6. Pearson correlation coefficients among composite variables.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that a single, well-structured GCT webinar was associated with statistically significant and practically meaningful improvements in students' perceived paraphrasing abilities. The observed mean gain of +0.73 across six constructs, with Cohen's d values reaching 0.73 for Understanding, aligns with Keck's (2014) finding that targeted, expert-modelled instruction produces superior paraphrasing outcomes relative to incidental learning. The magnitude of these effects is notable given the brevity of the intervention, although direct comparison with course-embedded instruction should be made cautiously: most prior demonstrations of paraphrasing instruction effects involve sustained practice with feedback, which a one-off webinar cannot replicate.

The pattern of gains across constructs is theoretically coherent. Understanding and Ability, the constructs most directly tied to skill knowledge, showed the largest improvements, suggesting that the expert framing and live modelling of paraphrasing strategies directly addressed students' knowledge gaps and skill uncertainties. This is consistent with Bandura's (1997) formulation of vicarious learning and verbal persuasion as drivers of self-efficacy enhancement. Students who arrived with the lowest confidence (pre-webinar scores of 1-2) and subsequently recorded the largest post-webinar increases exemplify the compensatory pattern the self-efficacy framework would predict, and mirror findings from the broader technology-mediated language learning literature in which structured multimodal input disproportionately benefits less confident learners (Xavierine et al., 2025).

Two measurement considerations qualify these gains. First, the halving of standard deviations from pre-test (overall $SD = 1.07$) to post-test ($SD = 0.59$) indicates compression of responses toward the scale ceiling; with post-test means above 4.3 on a five-point scale, the instrument had limited headroom to register differential growth among initially confident students, which also explains why 41% of participants recorded no change. Second, because both measurements are self-reports collected in immediate proximity to the intervention, the gains are best interpreted as shifts in competency beliefs rather than verified skill acquisition and may be partly inflated by demand characteristics and response-shift dynamics (Howard, 1980). Neither consideration negates the central finding (the consistency, size, and uniformity of gains across six constructs and eight instructional groups would be difficult to attribute to artefact alone), but both argue for follow-up designs incorporating objective paraphrasing tasks.

The non-significant ANOVA result ($p = .579$) across lecturer groups is an important equity finding. It suggests that the webinar's effectiveness was not contingent on class membership or individual lecturer practices, pointing to the robustness of the centrally delivered intervention rather than pre-existing differences in student preparation. This complements evidence that Malaysian undergraduates' outcomes in online English instruction are not contingent on the device through which they access it (Shanthi et al., 2023): together, these findings

suggest that well-designed synchronous online interventions can deliver comparable learning experiences across both instructional and technological access conditions, a practically significant property for institutions seeking scalable, equitable academic support.

The strong correlation between speaker quality and webinar satisfaction ($r = .851$) reinforces the well-established principle that the perceived credibility and communication effectiveness of the instructor is a primary determinant of learner satisfaction in online learning environments (Aliyah Hassan et al., 2023; Martin, 2005; Wang & Woo, 2007). The speaker's subject knowledge and approachability were rated highest, suggesting that students valued not only expertise but also psychological accessibility, consistent with the literature on guest lecturers as role models and sources of vicarious self-efficacy (Crow & Smith, 2005). The high rating for slide quality and engagement is also noteworthy in light of evidence that learners attribute language learning value to specific multimodal design features of digital input rather than to the medium itself (Xavierine et al., 2025); the effectiveness of a webinar may therefore depend substantially on the deliberate orchestration of verbal, textual, and visual channels, not merely on securing an expert speaker.

Qualitative feedback from Part 5.6, revealed three recurring themes: a preference for daytime scheduling, interest in incorporating interactive elements such as quizzes, and a desire for face-to-face components. These sentiments cohere with research showing that synchronous online learning is most effective when it incorporates interactive engagement activities beyond passive listening (Bower et al., 2015). Future iterations of the GCT webinar should consider integrating formative assessment activities and exploring hybrid delivery formats.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be noted. First, the absence of a control group means that observed gains cannot be exclusively attributed to the webinar; maturation, test-retest familiarity, and demand characteristics may have contributed. Second, the outcome measures are self-reported and therefore subject to social desirability bias and response-shift effects (Howard, 1980), particularly given that surveys were administered in close temporal proximity to the intervention; gains reflect perceived rather than demonstrated competence. Third, evidence of ceiling effects (post-test means above 4.3 and a halving of score variance) may have attenuated measurable gains among initially confident students and compressed between-student differences. Fourth, the study captures only immediate post-webinar responses; whether attitudinal and competency-belief gains persist remains unknown. Finally, the study was conducted within a single institution, which may limit the generalisability of findings to other educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that a single GCT webinar focused on paraphrasing skills was associated with significant, medium-to-large positive shifts in university students' self-reported beliefs about their understanding, interest, motivation, perceived importance of paraphrasing, ability, and openness to expert-led learning. The intervention was equitably effective across all lecturer groups, scale reliability was excellent, and both the speaker and webinar logistics were highly regarded by participants. These findings support the integration of expert-facilitated webinars as a regular, low-cost component of academic writing support infrastructure in Malaysian higher education, while underscoring that such sessions complement rather than replace sustained, practice-based paraphrasing instruction.

Future research should extend this work using objective paraphrasing task performance measures, longitudinal follow-up designs to examine retention of gains, and qualitative methods to illuminate the mechanisms through which expert-led webinars influence student competency beliefs. Comparisons between webinar and face-to-face delivery modes, and experimental manipulation of multimodal presentation features, would yield further insight for resource-allocation decisions in academic support programming.

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