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“Live” and “dead” paraphrasing: A research based on the services provided by modern online programmes

Abstract

The article explores the essence and basic techniques of paraphrasing (rewriting) of a Russian-language scientific text. The motivation for the study were modern requirements for the publication activity of teaching and research staff of Russian universities. The attempts of assessing the level of services provided by “synonymizers” – online paraphrasing tools – for Russian scientific text samples have not been discussed in linguistic literature. The synonymizers available on the Internet were given a task to process the introductory paragraph from the article “Literary Pedagogy: Formation and Prospects” by E. M. Shastina and colleagues. It was found that the main method of paraphrasing that modern online services apply is the use of synonyms, along with such methods as selecting hyponyms and hypernyms, descriptive rewriting, changing the syntactic structure and adding lexical units that do not affect the content of the utterance. We conclude that at the present, synonymizers cannot compete with people – the quality of paraphrasing performed by all tested online services turned out unsatisfactory compared to the human-made version that involves the same techniques but with a completely different result. Besides, the article presents “The list of popular words and phrases used in scientific texts (with identical and similar vocabulary)” developed by the authors.

Keywords: paraphrasing, rewriting, synonymizer, uniqueizer, scientific text, Antiplagiat (Anti-plagiarism) system.

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