

## Paraphrasing Skill of EED Students of UMK: A Preliminary Error Analysis

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### Abstract

It is nearly impossible to prepare an academic composition without taking ideas from others. To take outside ideas as well as to avoid doing plagiarism, there are three important ways; quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing. This paper is to examine paraphrasing skill of the students of EED UMK of Academic Writing Class in the academic year 2012/2013 of semester V. This small-scale investigation is basically a preliminary study before an upcoming action research to improve students paraphrasing skills. It is to address the following questions: (1) To what extent are the meanings of the original texts maintained in the students' paraphrases? (2) To what extent do the students' paraphrases have similar wording as the original passage? (3) Are there some grammatical (and lexical) errors/mistakes found in students' paraphrases? (4) Do the students include the source(s) of citations for the paraphrases? This descriptive study analyzes 25 paraphrases done by the students. This preliminary analysis reveals that, there are still many weaknesses found in students' paraphrases. Maintaining the meaning of original passages and using their own words in paraphrases is still a serious concern of both students and instructors. Moreover, the grammatical and lexical errors are still found in nearly all paraphrases. However, the students have also good points in that they have various sources of citation and they have acquired a good practice of citation by mentioning the sources when taking ideas from others. An action plan is waiting to improve students' writing skill, especially promoting students' paraphrasing skills

Keywords: Paraphrasing, Citation, Meaning Maintenance, Rewording, Errors

To improve the semester V students' readiness for upcoming research of final project (and also academic papers), courses called *Essay Writing* and *Academic Writing* are presented in English Education Department of The University of Muria Kudus (UMK). The main objective of *Essay Writing* is that the students are able to compose academic essays related to issues in English education, while *Academic Writing* is especially linked to research proposal writing for final project (or *Skripsi*). To support the main competence, there are some supporting sub-competences. One of them is the literature exploration in which the students are trained to find relevant theoretical and empirical supports for their research. In this course, the students are asked how to take ideas of others without doing plagiarism. In preparing the manuscript both parties have to organize their own ideas and relate them to others' ideas. Ideally, the students must be able to handle relevant citations properly. Some students, however, tend to apply 'copy and paste mode' in preparing the proposal manuscript in which many citations are found to be not properly and academically presented. Therefore, it is important to equip students with relevant skills as to help them improve their writing skills, especially handling the relevant citations needed by the project.

It is nearly impossible to prepare an academic composition without taking ideas from others (Oshima and Hogue, 2006: 41). To take ideas from others as well as to avoid doing plagiarism, there are three important ways; quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing. The students are to compose an English research proposal for which the activities of taking outside ideas can be very intensive. Therefore, paraphrasing skill is essential for the students. They further claim that paraphrasing is rewording the ideas taken from original texts using our own words but the ideas are not changed. Furthermore, they provide three keys to compose a good paraphrase: (1) The writer uses his/her own words and his/her own sentence structure. (2) The paraphrase is approximately the same number of words as the original passage. (3) The meaning of the original passage does not change (p.129).

According to <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>, Stolley et al (2013) presents some contradictory intellectual challenges when making compositions, as given in the following quotations.

Develop a topic based on what has already been said and written	<b>BUT</b>	Write something new and original
Rely on experts' and authorities' opinions	<b>BUT</b>	Improve upon and/or disagree with those same opinions
Give credit to previous researchers	<b>BUT</b>	Make your own significant contribution
Improve your English to fit into a discourse community by building upon what you hear and read	<b>BUT</b>	Use your own words and your own voice

Plagiarism, which according to Johnson and Christensen (2008, 103) belongs to “research misconduct”, happens when someone uses other’s words or ideas as if they were his/her own. Oshima and Hogue (2006:41) claim that one can be guilty of plagiarism when one uses outside source of information without providing the source of citation. They also mention that there are two kinds of plagiarism: “(1)Using information from outside without citing the sources (telling where you got the information), you are guilty of plagiarism”. To avoid auto-plagiarism, one must also cite the source even if it is of his/her own work. (2) “Even if when you cite your source, if your paraphrase is too similar to the original, you are guilty of plagiarism” (Oshima and Hogue, 2006:128).

Paraphrasing should maintain the meaning of the original passage and use different wording. In paraphrasing practice the students must include the source of citation and avoid grammar or lexical mistakes/errors. Paraphrasing can be done in sentence level or in paragraph level. The followings are examples of paraphrasing quoted from literature.

In <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples/examples-of-paraphrasing.html> (20 April 2013), some examples of paraphrases can be seen below.

Original : *Her life spanned years of incredible change for women.*

Paraphrase : *Mary lived through an era of liberating reform for women.*

Original : *Giraffes like Acacia leaves and hay and they can consume 75 pounds of food a day.*

Paraphrase : *A giraffe can eat up to 75 pounds of Acacia leaves and hay everyday.*

Original : *Any trip to Italy should include a visit to Tuscany to sample their exquisite wines.*

Paraphrase : *Be sure to include a Tuscan wine-tasting experience when visiting Italy.*

The idea of paraphrasing can also be seen from the following model given by Kispert (2004) as quoted by Oshima and Hogue (2006, 127-129).

Original Passage:

*Language is the main means of communication between peoples. But so many different languages have developed that language has been often a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among peoples. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. The arguments in favor of a universal language are simple and obvious. If all peoples spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties much be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert).*

Acceptable Paraphrase:

*Humans communicate through language. Because there are so many different languages, however, people around the world have difficult time understanding one another. Some people have wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. Their reasons are straightforward and clear. A universal language would build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feeling among countries (Kispert).*

Unacceptable Paraphrase 1 (The source is not cited.):

*Humans communicate through language. However, because there are so many languages in the world, language acts as an obstacle instead of as an aid to understanding. People have long wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. A universal language would certainly build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feeling among countries.*

Unacceptable Paraphrase 2 (It is too similar to the original passage.):

*Language is the principle means of communication between peoples. But so many different languages have developed that language has been often a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among peoples. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. The arguments in favor of a universal language are simple and obvious. If all peoples spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties much be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert).*

Paraphrasing is likely the most difficult to do since initially it requires a good reading comprehension skill of the students. After getting on the ideas, in their own words and expressions, they have to present the ideas without leaving out the source of citation. Paraphrasing is therefore much more difficult and challenging than quoting. It can be said that poor paraphrases might be caused by lack of reading comprehension skills, lack of vocabulary and grammar skills, and lack of writing (or paraphrasing) skills of the students. The poor ethical attention and appreciation may also drive students to eliminate the source of citation used in paraphrases. The use of advanced word processing and searching in the internet may also contribute to the unfair use of 'copy and paste mode' when writing the manuscript.

This paper is to examine paraphrasing skill of the students of EED UMK of Academic Writing Class in the academic year 2012/2013 of odd semester. In the future classes Academic Writing, with a view to employ some new methods/techniques to improve students' writing skills, the researcher set an ideal standard of paraphrasing skills as follows: First, all students belong to Academic Writing properly and correctly mention the source of citation. Second, 80% of students make no grammatical or lexical mistakes/errors in their paraphrases. Third, 80 % of students are able to achieve the best point (4) in maintaining the meaning from the original passage in their paraphrases. Next, 80 % of students are well able (having point 4) to paraphrase an original passages using their own words.

This small-scale investigation is basically a preliminary study before an action research to improve students paraphrasing skills for upcoming classes. In this discussion, error analysis is simply to find out the weaknesses of the students in paraphrasing. Discovering the weaknesses can prevent them from taking place in students' composition. It is aimed at answering the following problems: (1) To what extent are the meanings of the original texts maintained in the students' paraphrases? (2) To what extent do the students' paraphrases have similar wording as the original passage? (3) Are there some grammatical (and lexical) errors/mistakes found in students' paraphrases? (4) Do the students include the source(s) of citations for the paraphrases?

## METHOD

This descriptive study will analyze 25 students' paraphrases made by the students of semester V who belong to Academic Writing Class in academic year 2012/2013. The analysis is done by examining the maintenance of ideas of the original texts in the paraphrases and identifying grammatical and lexical errors found in the paraphrases made by the students. The result of this investigation will hopefully be useful for the students to improve their paraphrasing skills and for the lecturers to help the students write better and more effectively.

In doing paraphrasing practice, using final project manual of EED UMK, the students are trained and asked to find relevant passage from textbooks, research journal, websites and provide the source of citation, to quote the passage according and mention the citation, to paraphrase the passage and cite the source, and to summarize the passage and write the source.

Since this investigation is primarily aimed at improving students' writing skill in his own class, the researcher uses his own rating rubrics and for practical reasons he rates the students' paraphrases by himself. The students' paraphrases ratings include the meaning maintenance and wording similarity of the original passage. In analyzing the data in form of students' practice of bibliography writing, the researcher will examine whether the paraphrase has the following qualities: a. The source of citation is mentioned, b. The passage meaning does not change, c. The wording is not similar to the original, d. The grammar and lexical errors/mistakes are identified. Please have a look at the rating scale below.

Maintenance of Message/Meaning		Similarity in Wording	
Points	Percentage	Points	Percentage
4 (Very Similar)	76% - 100%	4 (Very Different)	76% - 100%
3 (Similar)	51% - 75%	3 (Different)	51% - 75%
2 (Different)	26% - 50%	2 (Similar)	26% - 50%
1 (Very Different)	0% - 25%	1 (Very Similar)	0% - 25%

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the findings of the study, the researcher first presents an acceptable example of a student' assignment in literature exploration in which he must find a relevant passage and has to quote, to paraphrase and to summarize the ideas. (Thanks to Nur Arief Fahriza, Student's Number: 201032010). See the following.

Source: A Textbook (Cahyono, Bambang Yudi and Utami Widiati. 2011. *The Teaching of*

Original Text	Vocabulary teaching aims at enabling learners to understand the concepts of unfamiliar words, gain a greater number of words, and use words successfully for communicative purpose. Thus, good vocabulary mastery supports mastery of each of the language skills, both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) (Cahyono and Widiati, 2011: 107).
Quotation	Cahyono and Widiati (2011: 107) say: “Vocabulary teaching aims at enabling learners to understand the concepts of unfamiliar words, gain a greater number of words, and use words successfully for communicative purpose. Thus, good vocabulary mastery supports mastery of each of the language skills, both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing).”
Paraphrase	The purpose of teaching vocabulary is to make learners understand about the concepts of unfamiliar words, get words as many as possible, and also use words well to communicate with the other people. Vocabulary mastery is needed in order to support the four language skills mastery, both receptive and productive. Receptive consists of listening and reading while productive consists of speaking and writing. (Cahyono and Widiati, 2011: 107)
Summary	Teaching vocabulary aims at making learners understand the concept of unfamiliar words, get many words, and use words to communicate. Vocabulary mastery is needed to support the language skills. (Cahyono and Widiati, 2011: 107)

The data consist of paraphrases made by the students during writing practice in Academic Writing class in the odd semester of academic year of 2012/2013. This simple analysis of the paraphrases examines: a. whether the source of citation is mentioned, b. whether the meaning of the passage changes, c. whether the wording of the paraphrase is similar to the original, and d. whether the grammar or lexical errors/mistakes are identified in the paraphrases. Please see the table below.

Table 3. Researcher’s Rating of Students Paraphrasing Practice (25 Passages of Students’ Choice)

Paraphrase	Source of Passage	Citation of Source	Maintenance in Meaning	Similarity in Wording	Mistakes/ Errors Happen
1	Internet	Yes	3	2	Yes
2	Text Book	Yes	4	3	No
3	Text Book	Yes	4	2	Yes
4	Final Project	Yes	3	2	Yes
5	Internet	Yes	3	2	Yes
6	Internet	Yes	2	2	Yes
7	Text Book	Yes	3	2	Yes
8	Journal	Yes	3	3	Yes
9	Internet	Yes	4	2	Yes
10	Journal	Yes	4	4	No
11	Text Book	Yes	3	2	Yes
12	Internet	Yes	3	2	Yes
13	Text Book	Yes	3	2	Yes
14	Text Book	Yes	3	3	Yes
15	Text Book	Yes	2	2	Yes
16	Proceeding	Yes	3	3	Yes
17	Internet	Yes	3	3	Yes
18	Final Project	Yes	3	2	Yes
19	Text Book	Yes	3	2	Yes
20	Text Book	Yes	3	2	Yes
21	Journal	Yes	2	2	Yes
22	Journal	Yes	3	2	Yes
23	Text Book	No	3	2	Yes
24	Journal	Yes	2	2	Yes
25	Text Book	Yes	2	2	Yes
Summary		24 Yes 1 No	74/25 = 2.96	57/25 = 2.28	23 Yes 2 No

Based on 25 students' paraphrases, it is revealed that the sources of citation consist of textbooks, proceeding, journal, final project of research and internets. This finding shows that the students have been working as required by the assignment. And all citations indicate that they belong to literature of English Education. In this context, internet has also become an important source since it can be easily and widely accessed by nearly all students. The students have also used various sources of citation. The use of hard-copy for citation is a good idea since recently students rely more on internet source. The initial analysis over students' paraphrases reveals the following findings.

First, it is about the ethical rule related to source citation. The finding shows a good result in that nearly all paraphrases include the source of citation in them (96%). Some students may forget to include the source of citation which may lead into accidental plagiarism, not the deliberate one. This position is a very good start to avoid plagiarism. Every idea taken from others must be documented and credited. It is to make it clear between the writer's own opinion and citation of others' opinions. The researcher much appreciate this finding since this a good learning of academic honesty and respect as well appreciation to previous of authors. A proper and honest citation is also a good character building for students. The following quotation is an example of citation taken form a textbook by H. Douglas Brown(2001). *Teaching by Principles: an Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Canada: Little, Brown & Company.

Kimble and Garmezy in Brown (2001:133) say: "Teaching is showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instruction, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand".

The student acknowledges that the idea is a secondary source. It is a good practice to mention the primary and the secondary sources of the citation. Mentioning the page number is a good practice.

Second, it is about whether the paraphrases made by the students contain lexical or some errors/mistakes in their paraphrases although many of them belong to minor errors/mistakes which do not disturb the meaning in general. This finding becomes a serious concern in upcoming classes. A syntactical and grammatical ability of the students must be well promoted. The ability to handle word choice is also in need to improve.

Below is an example:

Quotation	Dill (2010) argues "Grammar is not the most exciting subject in the world, but it is important. Many job applications and cover letters are passed over because the applicant did not use proper grammar. Grammar used to be taught using a language book, learning about parts of speech and doing language exercises such as diagramming sentences". (Taken from <a href="http://www.ehow.com/how_4471887_teach-grammar.html#ixzz1t3KTXliR">http://www.ehow.com/how_4471887_teach-grammar.html#ixzz1t3KTXliR</a> retrieved on 25 April 2012)
Paraphrase	Grammar is one of the subjects in English, so it is important to study about grammar. Grammar is used to make a sentence to be more meaningful. When we read a book, we know the meaning of the sentence based on the grammar. Because nowadays many books use English as a direction. (Dill, 2010) *

The symbol \* indicates the paraphrases need to be improved to become an acceptable one. The above paraphrase contains a grammatical error/mistake. The last sentence is a fragment. In addition, the paraphrase is oversimplified in meaning. In relation to the meaning of the original, there are some missing points of the passage; *the teaching of grammar* and *the importance of grammar in job application and official letters* are deleted.

Some mistakes/errors like misplacement, deletion and addition of grammatical also happen. Further analysis should be done to reveal the types of errors/mistakes in detail. If possible, having an interview with the students to get underlying causes of the errors/mistakes should be done.

Third, the investigation suggests that students are only able to achieve 2.96 points (out of 4.0 points) in maintaining the meaning of original passage. Only 16 % of students have achieved the expected skill. It is far below the ideal standard. This can mean that the students still have difficulties in comprehending the original text and/or the students might have problems in getting their comprehension

across through their paraphrases. This has become a deep concern of the researcher since this meaning maintenance skill belongs to the core skill of paraphrasing.

The following is an example of a paraphrase which contains several weaknesses. However, the student mentions the source which is a journal (Ragawanti, Debora Tri. 2007. *Construction and Obstructions of Teacher Explanation to Students' Learning: Perspectives of STIBA SATYA WACANA Students*. TEFLIN Journal, 18, 30-38).

<p>QUOTATION</p>	<p>Ragawanti (2007:38) says:          In modifying grammar, teachers may use simple tense and not many dependent clause as in many other context so that the sentences tend to be simple. In modifying vocabulary, teachers may use more frequently used words instead of the rarely used ones so that learners have more chances to be familiar with the words.</p>
<p>PARAPHRASE</p>	<p>Teachers use two kinds of modifying. There are grammar and vocabulary in order to make the students understand. In modifying grammar, teachers use simple tenses and tend to be simple. In modifying vocabulary, teachers use the words repetition way in order to make the learners to be familiar with the words. (Ragawanti, 2007:38)</p>

The above paraphrase is longer than the original. It means that the student adds more ideas to original. The paraphrase also contains some lexical and grammatical errors/mistakes.

Fourth, in doing paraphrases many students still rely on words of the original passage (2.28 points out of 4 points). Only 24% students sufficiently use their own words in paraphrasing. It suggests that the students still have to improve their vocabulary. Consulting a standard monolingual dictionary will be a great help. Facilities in word processors like the Thesaurus will also help. The use of synonyms and other word formation processes should also be promoted and highly recommended. Students' vocabulary items related to discussion of English education must be well promoted. Hard work is waiting to improve students' writing skill, especially promoting students' paraphrasing skills.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A preliminary analysis over 25 students' paraphrases at Academic Writing class (of Semester V of Academic Year 2012/2013) at English Education Department of the University of Muria Kudus covers sources of citation of textbooks, proceeding, journal, final project of research and internets. This study of students' paraphrasing skill suggests some findings as follows. First, nearly all paraphrases include the source of citation in them (96%) which is a good idea to avoid deliberate plagiarism. Second, most students (92%) make some errors/mistakes in their paraphrases. Third, students are only able to achieve 2.96 points (out of 4.0 points) in maintaining the meaning of original passage. Only 16 % of students have achieved the expected skill. It is far below the ideal standard and finally in making paraphrases many students still rely on words of the original passage (2.28 points out of 4 points). In short, there are still many weaknesses in students' paraphrasing skills. Maintaining the meaning of original passages and using their own words in paraphrases is still a serious concern of both students and instructors. Moreover, the grammatical and lexical errors are still found in nearly all paraphrases. However, the students have also good points in that they have various sources of citation and they have acquired a good practice of citation by mentioning the sources when taking ideas from others.

Since writing is basically an accumulative skill. The learning processes prior to *Academic Writing Class* need to focus on improving reading skills. It is also urgent to promote sentence combining and modification skill by improving students' active grammar mastery. Vocabulary mastery like synonym and antonym handling, as well as word formation skills, also need to be improved. All courses must contribute to the improvement of writing skills, especially the paraphrasing skills of the students. Further analysis should be done to reveal the types of errors/mistakes in detail. If possible, having an interview with the students to get underlying causes of the errors/mistakes should be done. A classroom action plan in upcoming *Academic Writing* classes needs to be conducted to improve students' writing skill, especially promoting students' paraphrasing skills. Any suggestions related to techniques, materials, and media which are likely to improve students' paraphrasing skills are welcome. Thanks.

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