

## THE STUDENTS’ OBSTACLES ON PARAPHRASING SKILLS

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**Abstract:** One of the main problems faced by students learning English as a second language is their inability to paraphrase passages. The objective of the paper is to find out the obstacles that students faced in paraphrasing skills. The method of the research used is a descriptive qualitative study in which the data are taken from interview. To determine the sample, the writer uses purposive sampling technique. The number of the research subject is 31 students as respondents. The samples are then given post-task interview to get the supporting data on their basic understanding on paraphrasing as well as their self-acknowledgement about their obstacles in paraphrasing. The result of the research shows that there are several obstacles such as limited vocabulary mastery (48.38%), lack of ability in catching the content of the original text (29.03%), lack of ability in re-arranging the sentence structure (16.12%), lack of experience in conducting paraphrasing (3.22%), and lack of ability in putting citation properly (3.22%). It shows problem solving to overcome the obstacles of the students’ paraphrasing ability, such as; give a clear understanding about the difference between paraphrasing and summarizing; intensive activity requiring the students to conduct paraphrasing; learn and improve in catching the content of the text, and also pay attention to enrich the vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** Paraphrasing, the Students’ Obstacles, Academic Writing

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the important skills to be mastered by the students. They use it to communicate with each other, as means of ideas and emotional expression, because when they write their ideas and emotions creatively, they are communicating on paper in their very best way and purposes.

There are many parts of writing, one of them is paraphrasing. It is formally taught to the English students in academic writing on the sixth semester syllabus on English education study program in Peradaban University. Paraphrasing involves making word, sentence and grammar changes, to rewrite the ideas expressed by someone else, while at the same time being careful to keep the same original meaning. It is not enough to simply change the order of a few words or replace them with synonyms. It is often more concise than the original.

Paraphrasing is an important matter for English learners including those learning English as foreign language. It is considered as one of the reading sub-skills in which the

reader has the ability to catch and know the other ways to express a given text (Yulian, 2015: 1). Moreover, paraphrasing itself becomes an important skill in writing. This is reasonable reason since it bring out lots of benefits for academic writing especially when the students write the thesis. This is a beneficial ability in order to make them become more understand about the content of the original text since they retell it in their own words as well as to avoid plagiarism.

Talking about the importance of paraphrasing in academic processes, this point correlates to college students who often get tasks requiring references from various sources. Paraphrasing is one of the techniques in citing others' ideas which needs to be accomplished by the students in using experts' ideas to be able to conduct a writing product for academic purposes. They need experts' statement to be included in their works. They have to read and understand the existing materials before incorporating the materials itself into their works.

However, copying and pasting the materials from existing sources directly into their works is not a responsible behavior. It is better to paraphrase rather than quote directly as explaining ideas in your own words shows that you really understand the reading you have done. Furthermore, Davis & Beaumont (2013: 2) state that using too many quotations does not reflect fluent writing, because they will make the writing looks like a patchwork only. Therefore, the students must consider the proportion of the direct quotation in their works and try to paraphrase the materials taken from the existing sources.

In reality, most of the students find obstacles, especially in applying paraphrase in their writing, so that they will make lots of mistakes and errors. It shows that the students' ability in writing is still poor and they need practicing and learning harder. Considering the importance of paraphrasing in academic processes, the writer is interested in doing a research entitled "The Students' Obstacles on Paraphrasing Skills.

## **Writing**

Writing is one of the important skills in teaching English. It has always occupied place in most English language course. Writing is a way to product language, which is also an action a process of discovering and organizing the idea, putting them on paper and reshaping and revising them. According to Hyland (2002: 1), writing is a principle of all people, either personally or social identities. In modern era, writing plays an important role in real life. Through writing, students try to express ideas and uses eyes, hands, and brain,

constantly as a unique way to reinforcing learning. Thus, writing is an essential language reinforcing skill and a crucial ability because it becomes a means of learning, discovering, developing, and refining language ability.

Bram (1995: 7) states that the meaning of writing is create or recreate communication in written form. Writing skill does not only talk about grammar and vocabulary but also the conceptual and judgment elements. Because of the difficulties, some efforts have done to solve the problems. In addition, Pramono (2009: vii) states that the biggest of our difficulty as Indonesian people in making writing form or report in English is we are not accustomed to practice in improving writing skill.

Teaching writing is a “toolkit”. It designs to help higher education lecturers and tutors in teaching writing to their students. Writing to learn means using writing as a tool to promote content learning; when students write, they think on paper. Content teachers assign writing activities to help students learn subject matter, clarify and organize their thoughts, and improve their retention of content. Writing to learn tasks can be based on reading, classroom discussion, teacher presentation, and media such as video or hands-on activities.

According to Yee (2010: 71), summary writing is an important skill for students to learn in English as Second Language (ESL). This allows them to paraphrase and summarize what they have read at the same time interpreting what they have understood from the passage. This is an important exercise to enhance their comprehension skills. Summary writing is perceived as a challenging task for most students with limited vocabulary.

Paraphrasing is the process of changing an authors’ word into readers’ own word. However, changing the original words does not mean changing the whole meaning of the original ones. Kitao in Yulian (2015: 6) states that paraphrasing is a technique when the reader rewords the opinion of the published authors by applying other words without changing the original meaning.

### **Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing is not only about verbatim, or changing each word of the author into the readers’ words only, but it deals with changing words and maintaining the passage original meaning and intent. There must be several alternations in lexical and structural existing in the original text. Furthermore, paraphrasing sometimes needs citation or the sources of the original text.

Moreover, paraphrasing is used to avoid plagiarism. People are said to plagiarize or to conduct when they take and use the materials directly from the existing one, or taking the materials and then changing them into their own words but they do not include the citation (the source of the materials itself).

Further, in catching the authors’ message, the doer of paraphrasing must really understand that the author’s write. They need to pay attention to the original meaning of them. The doer of paraphrasing also has to follow the context, so that the intended meaning of the text will not be changed. In summary, a good paraphrase is grammatically correct, preserves the meaning of the original sentence, while also being as different as possible.

*a. The Classification of Paraphrasing*

The term of lexical and structural paraphrase means transforming the linguistic forms (both lexical and structural) but preserving the intended meaning. The transformation itself can be carried out without referring to the communicative situation, such as where the sentence is expressed. In the following discussion, we classify several paraphrases based on linguistic point of view (Fujita, 2005: 14-17) as follows:

1) Clause-Structural Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is not merely about the transforming single word, but it involves syntactic transformations within clauses. Here are several variations of paraphrasing within clause:

- a) Inner-Clausal Negative-Affirmative Paraphrasing
- b) Paraphrasing of Comparative Expressions
- c) Voice Alternation

2) Multi-Clausal Paraphrasing

This class of paraphrasing derived from two or more clauses. Multi clausal paraphrasing can be performed by changing the themes of the sentence by splitting complex sentences given. This action sometimes needs the use of pronoun. Moreover, a conjunction connecting two clauses is required to preserve the rhetorical structure of the original compound sentence. However, in conducting multi clausal paraphrase we have to consider more about its cohesiveness.

- a) Separating Relative Clause from a given sentence / sentence aggregation
- b) Removal of Cleft Constructions
- c) Separating Adverbial Clause from a given sentence

d) Inter-Clausal Negative-Affirmative Paraphrasing

3) Paraphrases of Idiosyncratic Expression

Idiosyncratic expression is the expression being able to be substituting each other since they have the same meaning. To carry out the following paraphrase, the doer of paraphrasing needs to collect the exact pairs of expression, since they cannot be generalized at all. There are several variations of idiosyncratic expression paraphrase:

a) Paraphrasing of Idiomatic Expressions

b) Altering Notational Variants, Abbreviations, and Acronyms

c) Analysis of Metonymy and Synecdoche

d) Paraphrase of a Paragraph

*b. The Feature of Paraphrasing*

The material being discussed in this thesis focused on certain group, which are Lexical and Structural Paraphrase. Lexical Paraphrase refers to lexical replacement or changing the tenses or grammatical structures used (Fujita, 2005: 55). In order to create an acceptable paraphrasing, there are three basic features which are semantic similarity, lexical diversity, and syntactic diversity (McCarthy et al, 2009: 683-684). The explanation of each feature is as follows:

1) Semantic Similarity

The primary requirement for paraphrase is to convey the same meaning as that of the given expression. There are two different types of meaning, which are denotation and connotation. Denotation is the description in the world, while the implicit meaning is called as connotation.

2) Lexical Diversity

Lexical similarity refers to the degree to which the same words were employed in user response, regardless of syntax or semantics.

3) Syntactic Diversity

Syntactic diversity is a dimension in which different syntax (for example parts of speech and phrase structure) is employed in the students’ paraphrase, regardless of the words used.

*c. The Use of Paraphrasing*

The use of paraphrasing become a beneficial skill in reading skill because it requires the doer to completely understand the original passage as well as the intended

meaning of it. In order to make it clearer, the following points explain the use of paraphrasing:

- 1) To demonstrate the understanding of the author’s ideas
- 2) To explain difficulty of concepts or terminology
- 3) To enhance the wording of the original passage
- 4) To enhance the emphasis of the ideas to better match our own context
- 5) To avoid overuse of direct quotations and the consequent risk of losing our own voice

*d. The Technique of Paraphrasing*

As any other activities, paraphrasing requires several techniques or things that have to be done by the people conducting paraphrasing itself. Before people start to conduct paraphrasing activity, they need to ensure that they understand what is being read by them. A good paraphrasing uses the following techniques, as follow:

- 1) Preserve the author’s meaning or intent
- 2) Use synonyms/different forms of words
- 3) Change the order and structure of sentences
- 4) Change the perspective or voice
- 5) Cite the source accurately

There are some studies related to paraphrasing, Ari Yulian (2015) and Wahyu Khairunnisa (2014). The first is Ari Yulian (2015) from English Educational Program of Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto conducted the research entitled “*A Study on the Students’ Paraphrasing Ability at the Sixth Semester Students of English Education Department of University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto in Academic Year 2014/2015*”. The objectives of the study were to find out the paraphrasing ability and to know the problems which students face in paraphrasing. The method of investigation was descriptive study and the technique of data collection used test and interview. The result of the test was found that there were several problems they encountered such as lack of ability in catching the content of the original text (46.34%), limited vocabulary mastery (24.39%), lack of ability in re-arranging the original text (21.95%), lack of experience in conducting paraphrasing (4.87%), and lack of awareness in putting the citation properly (2.43%). The researcher concluded that the students’ criterion in paraphrasing was 58%. It showed that their paraphrasing ability considered as fair.

The differences between the researcher’s study and the writer’s are the technique which is used and the research place. The researcher used sampling technique which was took 30% from the total number of each class as the sample and conducted the research in University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, but this study does not used sampling technique and the writer conducts this study in English Education Study Program of Peradaban University.

The second is Wahyu Khairunnisa (2014) from English Education Study Program of Tanjungpura University conducted the research entitled “*Students’ Problems in Paraphrasing at the Seventh Semester Students in Seminar on ELT Class Academic Year 2013/2014*”. The objectives of the study were defined the students’ ability in paraphrasing, the problems in students’ paraphrasing and the cause of the problems. The method of investigation was case study and the technique of data collection used test, questionnaire, and interview. The result of this study showed that there were many problems, such as; it was found that the students made mistake in changing the order of ideas (76.92%), and the interviewees mentioned changing word as their problem in paraphrasing (80%). The researcher concluded that the different result of the instruments was caused by the students’ lack of understanding toward the criteria of a good paraphrasing. It showed that the lack of vocabulary and understanding about paraphrasing discovered as the causes of the students’ problems in paraphrasing.

The differences between the researcher’s study and the writer’s are in the kind of research and the population of research. The researcher did case study at the seventh semester students in Seminar on ELT class, but this study conducts descriptive qualitative research at the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program of Peradaban University.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION**

The method covers the research design, the source of data, technique of data collection, and technique of data analysis. In research design, the writer wants to know obstacles encountered in paraphrasing activity. The method of this research is descriptive qualitative study.

According to Widoyoko (2012: 29), data source in this research is the subject where the data are obtained. The data source of this study is only primary data source. Primary data source is the data which are obtained from the first source or the data which conducted by the writer directly (Widoyoko, 2012: 22). In this study, the primary data is

the result of interview about the students’ obstacles in paraphrasing by the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program of Peradaban University which is conducted by the writer directly.

The data that could be revealed is classified into three types namely fact, opinion, and ability (Arikunto, 2010). In collecting the data, the writer uses interview to find out the students’ obstacles in paraphrasing. Interview is a way to gain the information or data by oral interaction (Suwartono in Yulian, 2015: 24). It is conducted by the writer as an interviewer to the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program as the interviewees. The purpose of interview is to find out what is in one’s mind related to their feelings, thought, experiences, opinions, and others that cannot be observed. In technique of data analysis, the writer uses the interview. The data that will be analyzed through some steps, namely: collecting the data, reducing the data, making conclusion/verification and presenting the data.

## **DISCUSSION**

The discussion here is divided into two parts, there are finding and interpretation. This part includes the result of the data analysis is from interview. It is done in order to confirm the students’ obstacles encountered when they conduct paraphrasing activity.

In order to answer research question mentioned in the first chapter, the writer uses the interview of the students’ obstacles in conducting paraphrasing. The writer gets the information of the students’ obstacles through the analysis of the test result. However, in order to make the data more reliable, the writer also conducts the interview to get the students’ self-acknowledgements about the obstacles they faced in doing the paraphrasing test.

The aim of this question is to get the supporting data on the students’ obstacles in paraphrasing which is previously got from the analysis of the result. However, this question is expected to find if there are any other obstacles faced by the students which have not been known toward the analysis of the test. The following are the students’ acknowledgement of their obstacles in paraphrasing,

*The obstacles in paraphrasing are to catch the meaning of the sentences, because it is relate to the interpersonal meaning of the writer. The less in vocabulary is also be the main obstacles for me. (Student 25)*



Another student states,

*I usually confuse to find the word to be suitable. (Student 14)*

While another student says,

*Sometimes, I can't understand uncommon vocabulary or diction. I am difficult to compose the sentences in written text. (Student 16)*

In order to make it clearer, the kind of obstacles and frequency of the students have the same obstacles shown in the table below.

**Table. 1. Students' Obstacles in Paraphrasing**

No	The Students' Obstacles	Frequency	
		Percentage (%)	Number (Student)
1.	Limited vocabulary mastery	48.38	15
2.	Difficulty in catching the content of the original text	29.03	9
3.	Lack of ability in re-arranging the sentence structure	16.12	5
4.	Lack of experience in conducting paraphrasing	3.22	1
5.	Lack of ability in putting citation properly	3.22	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>31</b>

The biggest obstacle of the fifteen students is they lack of vocabulary mastery (48.38%). So, their alternation on the words used is limited. They commonly change few words from the original sentences only, and the view of them in making a whole alternation on the words used.

Moreover, there are some of students' acknowledgements which are then admitted through the result of the test that there are nine students who lack of ability in catching the content of the original text (29.03%). This is a serious obstacle since the very basic thing related to paraphrasing understands the content of the original text. Without a good understanding on the content, it is difficult for the doer of paraphrase to conduct paraphrasing.

Furthermore, the five students also lack of ability in re-arranging the sentence structure (16.12%). The students tend to make the alternation by only repositioned the words and add some preposition conjunctions. In addition, there is also an acknowledgement that they have very few experiences for paraphrasing. The student

(3.22%) states that the limited chances that require them to paraphrase made them not use to doing it. They feel difficult and awkward to paraphrase and as a result, their paraphrase product is considered not legitimate. At last, even though they have already been able to change the original text, but they also lack of awareness on putting the appropriate citation for the text or sentence they had paraphrased. There is only one student (3.22%) acknowledged this obstacles in the interview.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the result of research findings and discussion, the writer gets the result of interview, several conclusions is derived. The students' obstacles in paraphrasing, there are various obstacles encountered by the students during their paraphrasing Activity. The following is the percentage of students' in having obstacles in paraphrasing; 48.38% lack of vocabulary mastery, 29.03% lack of ability in catching the content of the original text, 16.12% lack of ability in re-arranging the sentence structure, 3.22% lack of experience in conducting paraphrasing, and 3.22% lack of ability in putting citation appropriately.

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