

THE PROCESS OF PARAPHRASING: EXERCISES TO BUILD PARAPHRASING SKILLS

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Introduction

Paraphrasing is a complex process that requires advanced grammar skills and a large vocabulary in order to effectively restate information. Students can have difficulty paraphrasing if they have had little or no experience paraphrasing and if they don't have the grammar and vocabulary skills to paraphrase appropriately. Giving students paraphrasing exercises on a regular basis, in class or as homework, can help them become more familiar with the process of paraphrasing. Having students paraphrase a complex sentence in several different ways can help them learn how to use a wide variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Analyzing the grammar and vocabulary used in several possible paraphrases of a sentence can help them understand paraphrasing and can help them improve their grammar and vocabulary skills. This paper will examine examples of paraphrasing exercises the author gave her Academic Writing II students at Tsuda College for five years, from 2008 to 2012. What the students thought of the exercises and what they learned from them will also be discussed.

My Experience Teaching Paraphrasing

In 1996 I first began teaching English language students how to paraphrase when I taught a class on how to write a 10-page research paper in the Academic English Language Program at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. The book I was using, *Writing Research Papers* by Andrew Harnack, briefly mentioned paraphrasing: "...you can paraphrase 'specific sentences and passages' by converting

them in your own words” (64-65). Steps on how to paraphrase or examples of correct and incorrect paraphrases were not given. The book had a model research paper in the appendix and a paraphrase was pointed out, but the original source of the paraphrase was not given. I could show my students what a paraphrase looked like, but since I didn’t have the original sentence to compare it to, I couldn’t explain the process of paraphrasing to them.

In 2005 I didn’t have a textbook when I taught English language students how to write a 30-page research paper in the Department of English Language and Literature at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat, Oman. I went online and used the *Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)* to teach paraphrasing. I printed out sections on paraphrasing, gave them to my students and explained them in class. The section “Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words” includes “6 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing”. The steps include: “Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning....Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card....Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form” (*The Purdue OWL*). The website also offers “the original passage”, “a legitimate paraphrase” and “a plagiarized version”. There is no explanation of why the paraphrase is legitimate or why the version is plagiarized.

From 2008 to 2012, I taught paraphrasing to English language students in Academic Writing II in the Department of English at Tsuda College in Tokyo, Japan. In the first semester students write 200-300 word essays and in the second semester they write 200-300 word essays and a 1,500 word research paper. I used three textbooks over a period of five years: *Writing Academic English* by Alice Ohima and Ann Hogue, *A Writer’s Reference* by Diana Hacker, and *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers. In *Writing Academic English* the chapter on paraphrasing gives an original passage, a paraphrase and two unacceptable paraphrases, and a short explanation why they are unacceptable: “Paraphrase 2 is plagiarism because it is too similar to the original” (129). It offers five steps for paraphrasing, which include: “Read the original passage several times until you understand it fully.... It helps

to take notes. Write down only a few words for each idea -- not complete sentences....Write your paraphrase from your notes. Don't look at the original while you are writing" (130). *A Writer's Reference* advises: "To avoid plagiarizing an author's language, resist the temptation to look at the source while you are summarizing or paraphrasing. Close the book, write from memory, and then open the book to check for accuracy" (361). It also gives the original source, and an acceptable and unacceptable paraphrase with a short explanation of why it is unacceptable: "The first paraphrase of the following source is plagiarized - even though the source is cited - because too much of its language is borrowed from the original" (361). *A Pocket Style Manual* gives an "original source", "plagiarism: unacceptable borrowing" and "acceptable paraphrase". Copied words in the unacceptable paraphrase have been underlined to explain why it is plagiarized. It advises: "To avoid plagiarizing an author's language, don't look at the source while you are summarizing or paraphrasing. After you have restated the author's idea in your own words, return to the source and check that you haven't used the author's language or sentence structure or misrepresented the author's ideas" (110).

The Purdue OWL, Writing Academic English, A Writer's Reference, and *A Pocket Style Manual* advise students to write a paraphrase without looking at the original. I've never understood this advice and I've never given it to my students. When I paraphrase, I always look very closely at the original passage and I very carefully choose different words and grammatical structures with the same meaning. It's not an easy process. I never try to write a paraphrase without looking at the original. The website and textbooks give examples of good and bad paraphrases, but they are very short and lack detailed analysis. Short explanations of why a paraphrase is acceptable or unacceptable can be informative, but without detailed explanations of what grammar or vocabulary was used to create the paraphrase, a student is forced to infer what the process was to paraphrase correctly or incorrectly, which can be difficult and confusing for the student.

After looking at these explanations and examples of paraphrasing in their textbooks and on handouts taken from the Web, my students still had difficulty paraphrasing. Talking about their drafts in writing

conferences, I learned that they often paraphrased incorrectly because they didn't understand the original passage when they first read it and they didn't have strong enough vocabulary and grammar skills to convert the original sentence into a new sentence "using their own words." I started to ask myself, "What is the process of paraphrasing and how can I teach my students to paraphrase correctly?"

Paraphrasing to Understand a Sentence

I first had the idea for creating paraphrasing exercises when I taught a grammar class in the Department of English Language and Literature at Sultan Qaboos University in 2006. I was using the book *Writing: a College Workbook* by James A.W. Heffernan, John E. Lincoln and Cindy Moore. One of my students raised her hand in class and said she couldn't understand the meaning of a sentence from the book: "Annoyed because he could not have his way, Rex walked out" (155). I explained the meaning of the sentence by first looking at the grammar structures in the sentence. I divided the sentence into three parts. I told her that "Annoyed" was a reduced adverb clause (participial phrase), "because he could not have his way" was an adverb clause, and "Rex walked out" was an independent clause. Then I rewrote the sentence into three shorter sentences: "Rex was annoyed. Rex could not have his way. Rex walked out." I combined the three sentences into one sentence using "because" and "so" to show the cause/effect relationship between the three shorter sentences: "Rex was annoyed because he could not have his way, so he walked out." To help the student understand the vocabulary, I substituted synonyms for some of the words and rewrote the sentence: "Rex was angry because he wasn't able to do what he wanted, so he left." My student was able to understand the sentence after I explained it in this way. At that moment I realized I had just used paraphrasing to help my student understand the meaning of the sentence. I began to wonder how I could help my students in my research writing class understand the vocabulary and grammar of paraphrasing. I felt that I needed to create a handout that explained paraphrasing in greater detail than what was found

in my students' textbooks and on the Web. I also felt I needed to create paraphrasing exercises that would give my students weekly practice with paraphrasing so that they could not only become familiar with paraphrasing, but they could also improve their paraphrasing skills.

The Process of Paraphrasing

When I started to teach Academic Writing II in the Department of English at Tsuda College in 2008, I decided to make the teaching of paraphrasing an important part of my lesson plans. For the past five years, at the beginning of the first semester, I ask my students if they know what paraphrasing is. A few students raise their hands, but most of them are not familiar with paraphrasing. I explain that paraphrasing:

- is used in the concluding paragraph of an essay to remind the reader of the thesis statement or to summarize the main ideas
- is used in research papers to give support, examples, summaries, or as an alternative to a quote
- shows the reader that the writer has understood what she has read and has the necessary vocabulary and grammar skills to rewrite what she has read
- is a difficult skill that requires a large vocabulary, good thesaurus and dictionary skills, and a very good understanding of English grammar
- prevents plagiarism when done correctly
- needs a lot of practice to do it well

Since I felt like students needed detailed information about the process of paraphrasing, I created a handout that includes information on how to paraphrase, an example of a paraphrase, an explanation of the paraphrase, possible paraphrases, a list of reporting verbs, and examples of how to cite the paraphrase:

The Process of Paraphrasing

To paraphrase a sentence is to rewrite the sentence using different words, different grammar, and different word order. A paraphrase has the same meaning as the original sentence and it is about the same length.

When paraphrasing:

- Don't copy the original sentence
- Don't use too many of the original words
- Don't change the meaning of the original sentence
- Don't leave out important information

The process of paraphrasing:

- Identify grammar structures and key words
- Change grammar structures
- Change words
- Change word order

Grammar structures:

- **independent and dependent clauses**
- **word forms:** nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- **clauses:** adjective, noun, and adverb clauses
- **phrases:** prepositional phrases, participial phrases (reduced clauses)
- **verb phrases:** active voice and passive voice, phrasal verbs
- **connecting words:** coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs
- **transitional words and phrases**

Relationships between ideas:

cause/effect, purpose, manner, comparison, contrast, opposition, concession, time, place, condition, addition

Paraphrasing Example:

Those whose self-esteem is low do not necessarily see themselves as worthless or wicked, but they seldom say good things about themselves.

(*Psychology* by David G. Myers, page 608)

Grammar structures:

- adjective clause: **whose self-esteem is low**
- verb phrase: **do not see themselves as worthless or wicked**
- verb phrase: **seldom say good things about themselves**

Relationships between ideas

- There are people who have low self-esteem.
- They do not necessarily see themselves as worthless or wicked.
- They seldom say good things about themselves.
- **Opposition:** but

Key words:

- **self-esteem**
- **low**
- **necessarily**
- **see**
- **worthless**
- **wicked**
- **but**
- **seldom**
- **say**
- **good**

Synonyms:

- **self-esteem:** self-worth, self-respect
- **low:** poor, unfavorable, negative, bad
- **necessarily:** inevitably, automatically, inexorably, certainly, definitely
- **see:** view, perceive, describe, think of

- **worthless:** unworthy, useless, no-good, of little/no value, despicable
- **wicked:** evil, sinful, bad, immoral, corrupt, dishonorable, unethical, unholy
- **but:** however, although, though, even though, while, whereas
- **seldom:** rarely, hardly ever, infrequently
- **say:** talk, speak
- **good:** positive, nice, favorable

Possible paraphrases:

- People with low self-esteem don't necessarily view themselves as evil or worthless; however, they rarely talk positively about themselves.
- Although they hardly ever speak favorably about themselves, people who have poor self-esteem do not inevitably perceive themselves as useless or bad.
- People with a low opinion of themselves generally describe themselves in negative terms, even though they don't think they are really bad.
- People with low self-esteem may or may not think of themselves in strongly negative ways, but they rarely say anything positive about themselves.

Introducing paraphrases:

- According to him...
- He believes that ...
- As he believes...
- Her point is ...
- In her opinion...

Reporting verbs: affirm, allege, argue, assert, assume, believe, explain, claim, complain, conclude, contend, demonstrate, describe, discover, discuss, emphasize, estimate, examine, explore, find, illustrate, imply, indicate, inform, maintain, mention, note, observe, predict, present, presume, point out, propose, recognize, recount,

reveal, report, say, show, state, stress, suggest, suppose, suspect, tell, verify

Reporting nouns: argument, claim, complaint, conclusion, explanation, point, opinion

Example:

- David Myers points out that people with low self-esteem don't necessarily view themselves as evil or worthless; however, they rarely talk positively about themselves.
- According to Myers, although they hardly ever speak favorably about themselves, people who have poor self-esteem do not inevitably perceive themselves as useless or bad.

Exercises to Build Paraphrasing Skills

Usually paraphrasing and plagiarism are discussed as a student is learning how to write a research paper, but I want the students to have as many opportunities as they can to practice writing paraphrases before they actually write their research papers. During the first semester at Tsuda College, when students write essays, I give them paraphrasing exercises in every class, which meet once a week. Students do about ten exercises during the first semester. I give them a few paraphrasing exercises at the beginning of the second semester, when they write essays and a research paper. Sometimes I give the exercises at the beginning of class, which takes 10 to 15 minutes. I have only given them as homework a few times, and each time I have done this, at least one or two of the students did not do the homework. Sometimes students do the paraphrasing exercises while I conduct individual conferences with students about their essays, which can take 30 to 40 minutes. Students always use their electronic dictionaries/thesauruses when they do the paraphrasing exercises. I collect and correct the students' paraphrases. The following week, at the beginning of class, I give them back their corrected paraphrases. I explain the mistakes I corrected to the whole class and sometimes to an individual student if she asks me to do so in private. I also give them a list of

possible paraphrases and I explain the different kinds of vocabulary and grammar structures used in each possible paraphrase. I also point out how the order of information has been rearranged. Changing the organization of the sentence was often the hardest part of paraphrasing for students to do. This can take 10 to 15 minutes of class time. Then I give them a new paraphrasing exercise to do in class.

When I create paraphrasing exercises, I choose sentences to be paraphrased from a variety of sources: *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, and *BBC News*. I choose the sentences for their vocabulary (word forms, collocations, and idioms), grammar (complex structures) and content (academic in nature). For most of the semester the sentence in the exercises is broken into smaller parts so that the students can focus on paraphrasing shorter pieces of the sentence before they combine the pieces into a more complex sentence. I feel it also helps them understand what the sentence means by focusing on smaller chunks of information. Towards the end of the first semester and at the beginning of the second semester I give the students a sentence to paraphrase that is not divided into parts. I always ask students to paraphrase a sentence in several different ways. I want them to find and use a variety of different synonyms, grammar structures, and organization to make several different sentences with the same meaning. In the possible paraphrases they can see the many different ways the sentence can be paraphrased using different synonyms, word forms, collocations, idioms, grammar structures, and organization.

The following are four examples of paraphrasing exercises I have given my students:

Paraphrasing Exercise 1

Paraphrase each part of this sentence in three different ways.

It is not illegal in some cultures to be married to more than one woman, but the monogamous relationship is the most common.
(*Barron's TOEFL iBT Internet-Based Test 2008* by Pamela J. Sharpe, page 96)

It is not illegal in some cultures to be married to more than one woman

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

but

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

the monogamous relationship is the most common.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Combine these paraphrases into three different sentences.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Possible Paraphrases

The following quote can be paraphrased in several ways.

It is not illegal in some cultures to be married to more than one woman, but the monogamous relationship is the most common.
(*Barron's TOEFL iBT Internet-Based Test 2008* by Pamela J. Sharpe, page 96)

1. In some cultures polygamy is legal; however, monogamy is found in most cultures.
2. Although having more than one wife is allowed in some countries, being married to one wife is the norm.
3. Even though polygamy is accepted in some places, monogamy is more widely practiced.

4. Although having a multiple number of wives is not against the law in some cultures; most men marry only one wife.
5. Most people choose monogamy, even though polygamy is legal in some countries.

In explaining the grammar and vocabulary, I show that chunks of information can have similar meanings:

it is not illegal = is legal, is allowed, is accepted, is not against the law

in some cultures = in some countries, in some places,

to be married to more than one woman = polygamy, having more than one wife, having a multiple number of wives

but = however, although, even though,

the monogamous relationship = monogamy, being married to one wife, marry only one wife

is the most common = most cultures, is the norm, is more widely practiced, most men, most people

Paraphrasing Exercise 2

Paraphrase each part of this sentence in three different ways.

Some 10 million girls a year are married off before the age of 18 across the world, according to a UNICEF report released this year.

(“What Is It Like To Be a Child Bride?” by Nel Hedayat, *BBC News Magazine*, October 4, 2011)

some 10 million girls a year

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

are married off before the age of 18

- 1.
- 2.

3.

across the world

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

according to a UNICEF report released this year

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Combine these paraphrases into three different sentences.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Possible Paraphrases

The following sentence can be paraphrased in different ways.

Some 10 million girls a year are married off before the age of 18 across the world, according to a UNICEF report released this year. (“What Is It Like To Be a Child Bride?” by Nel Hedayat, *BBC News Magazine*, October 4, 2011)

some 10 million girls a year

1. each year about 10 million girls
2. around 10 million girls per year
3. about 10 million girls every year

are married off before the age of 18

1. are forced to get married before they turn 18 years old
2. are compelled to marry before they are 18
3. are coerced into marriage before they become 18

across the world

1. around the world
2. all over the world
3. throughout the world

according to a UNICEF report released this year

1. UNICEF published a report this year that says that
2. a report that was published by UNICEF this year states
3. a report that came out this year from UNICEF explains that

These sentences can be paraphrased in the following ways:

1. A report that was published by UNICEF this year states that each year all over the world about 10 million girls are forced to get married before they turn 18 years old.
2. UNICEF published a report this year that says that around the world about 10 million girls per year are compelled to marry before they are 18.
3. A report that came out this year from UNICEF explains that throughout the world about 10 million girls every year are coerced into marriage before they become 18.

Paraphrasing Exercise 3

Paraphrase each part of this sentence in three different ways.

Japan has long had deep misgivings about immigration and has tightly controlled the ability of foreigners to live and work here.

(“Strict Immigration Rules May Threaten Japan’s Future” by Chico Haralan, *The Washington Post*, July 28, 2010)

Japan has long had deep misgivings about immigration

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

has tightly controlled

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

the ability of foreigners to live and work here

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Combine these paraphrases into three different sentences.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Possible Paraphrases

The following sentence can be paraphrased in different ways.

Japan has long had deep misgivings about immigration and has tightly controlled the ability of foreigners to live and work here.
 (“Strict Immigration Rules May Threaten Japan’s Future” by Chico Haralan, *The Washington Post*, July 28, 2010)

Japan has long had deep misgivings about immigration

1. For a long time Japan has had reservations about immigration
2. Japan has had a lot of doubt about immigration for a long time
3. For many years Japan has had second thoughts about people immigrating to Japan

has tightly controlled

1. has severely restricted
2. strictly regulated
3. rigorously managed

the ability of foreigners to live and work here

1. how immigrants can live and make money in Japan
2. how foreigners are able to earn a living and live in Japan
3. the way foreign people can work and live here

This sentence can be paraphrased in the following ways:

1. For a long time Japan has had reservations about immigration and it has severely restricted how foreigners can earn a living and live here.
2. For many years Japan has had second thoughts about people immigrating to Japan and has strictly regulated how they can work and live here.
3. Japan has had a lot of doubt about immigration for a long time and it has rigorously managed how immigrants can live and make money in Japan.

Paraphrasing Exercise 4

Paraphrase the following quote in two different ways.

Many babies in Afghanistan die because of traditional practices, such as placing them on the floor to ward off evil spirits, which can cause infection.

(“Save the Children: No Expert Birth Help for Millions”, *BBC News*, 1 April 2011)

- 1.
- 2.

Possible Paraphrases

The following quote can be paraphrased in several ways.

Many babies in Afghanistan die because of traditional practices, such as placing them on the floor to ward off evil spirits, which can cause infection.

(“Save the Children: No Expert Birth Help for Millions”, *BBC News*, 1 April 2011)

1. When a baby in Afghanistan is put on the floor as a way to protect it from bad spirits, it can cause an infection, and many babies have died from these kinds of traditional practices.
2. In Afghanistan traditional practices like putting a baby on the floor as a way to ward off bad spirits can cause infection, which leads to the death of many babies.
3. Traditional practices in Afghanistan cause many babies to die, such as when babies are placed on the floor to get rid of evil spirits and they get an infection.
4. According to traditional Afghani customs, babies are put on the ground to protect them from evil spirits, but many of them die because this practice can lead to infection.

Paraphrasing Questionnaire

At the end of each spring semester I give my Academic Writing II students a paraphrasing questionnaire. I ask seven questions concerning the difficulty of the exercises, how they improved their writing, grammar, vocabulary, and paraphrasing skills, if the possible paraphrases were helpful, and if the exercises were a good use of class time. In 2008 14 students answered the questionnaire, in 2009 12 students answered, in 2010 12 students answered, in 2011 13 students answered and in 2012 16 students answered the questionnaire, for a total of 57 students and 399 responses. The following is a short summary and discussion of their answers. These are the students’ actual answers and they are unedited.

Difficulty of Paraphrasing

The first question I asked was, “Were the paraphrasing exercises easy or difficult? Why?” Only three out of the 57 respondents said the exercises were easy:

- “Easy. Because we can use dictionary.”
- “It is not difficult because we can use an electronic Japanese-English dictionary.”
- “They were easy because this class was easy to understand.”

The rest of the students felt the exercises were very difficult (3 students), difficult (42 students), a little difficult (7 students), not too difficult (2 students), not very difficult (1 student), not easy (2 students), sometimes easy, sometimes difficult (2 students) and at the proper level (2 students). The students gave many reasons why. Some said they were difficult because they had never done paraphrasing exercises before. Several students said they had difficulty because they didn’t understand the original sentence:

- “They were difficult because we have to understand what the sentences say precisely, and have to understand the meanings of each words precisely.”
- “They were very difficult for me! To begin with, I couldn’t realize the meaning of the original sentence. I think I have to practice reading accurately before practicing paraphrasing.”
- “I think they were difficult because I didn’t understand correct meanings or subtle differences of some English words.”

Others said they didn’t have enough vocabulary, or they didn’t understand the nuances of English words, or they had weak grammar skills:

- “They were difficult because I have a poor vocabulary and I don’t know idiom well.”
- “It was difficult because I have a limited vocabulary.”
- “It was difficult for me because I sometimes have difficulties to find different words to say the same thing.”
- “It was a little difficult because I have a little vocabulary and do not understand English grammar well.”
- “They were very difficult for me. Because my ability of English grammar is weak.”

One student found paraphrasing difficult but fun: “It was difficult but very fun to think about the structure, vocabulary and create my own sentences.”

Paraphrasing and Writing Skills

The second question I asked was, “Did the paraphrasing exercises help you improve your writing skills? Why?” All of the students except three answered yes to this question:

- “I am not sure if it helped me, but after I start paraphrasing in class, I started to think how I can write sentences in different way in other English classes.”
- “I’m not sure my writing skill had improved, yet I found many grammar mistake and difference, e.g. think of/about, which used to seem to me “the same” and better /effective words/sentences.”
- “I have no opinion either way. My writing skill is still bad. I want to practice more. If I do more, my skill may be a little improved.”

Several students wrote that they could use different words, especially academic words, to express themselves in many different ways:

- “It really helped me to improve my writing skills because I could avoid repetitive words when I write my essays.”
- “Yes, I like paraphrasing exercises. Now I can use academic words.”
- “Yes, I could learn a lot of academic words and natural expression of English.”
- “Yes! Your lecture is very understandable. I became to be able to be conscious of words when I was writing my essay.”
- “Yes, because when I write an essay, I find different grammar or words.”

Three students said the paraphrasing exercises helped them when they wrote their essays:

- “Yes, because paraphrasing exercise was useful to write a essay.”
- “Yes. Because I could use paraphrasing when I wrote conclusion in English composition.”
- “Thanks to the exercises, I now can think of several forms of writing and can choose which one fits better to other sentences in my essay.”

One student mentioned how the exercises helped her understand plagiarism:

- “I think it helped me a lot. Until I practiced paraphrasing in the writing class, I didn’t know the rules and about plagiarism. Even I can’t paraphrase well, now I know how to paraphrase correctly.”

One student felt the exercises prepared her for writing a research paper:

- “Yes. I really think so, because I know how to paraphrase when I write my research paper.

Paraphrasing and Grammar Skills

The third question I asked was, “Did the paraphrasing exercises help you improve your grammar skills? Why?” All but seven said yes. Two students said no, two students said so-so, two students said they didn’t know, and one said she wasn’t sure. Several of the students said that paraphrasing made them think about grammatical rules more carefully:

- “Yes. Because I came to think about grammar.”
- “Yes, they did, because when I change a word, I also have to think that this grammar is right or not.”
- “Yes, it did. Thanks to the paraphrasing, I could notice my wrong expression and usage of my grammar.”
- “Yes. I found my weak point is articles from the exercises, so I paid more attention to articles.”
- “It helped me improve my grammar skills because I had to change sentence structure when I do paraphrase. Therefore, I came to pay attention grammars.”

Students wrote about using grammar:

- “Yes, they did, because I can learn grammar practically than I just study grammar in grammar class.”
- “Yes. Because they reminded me of lots of grammar that I studied before, but I completely forgot.”
- “I don’t know whether the paraphrasing exercise relates with grammar skills. I think if we aren’t good at using grammar, we can’t make good paraphrasing.”

Changing word order was mentioned several times:

- “Yes! Because we need to change the grammar and the order.”
- “Yes. I had a lot of discovery on paraphrasing (e.g. changing organization).”
- “Yes. Because when I tried to change word order, I became careful about grammar.”

Looking up words in their dictionaries was mentioned as a way to learn how to use the words:

- “Yes, when I make paraphrasing, I looked up words in the dictionary, and learned how I can use the words.”

Students said they learned from my explanations of grammar and vocabulary:

- “Yes, because you explained not only vocabulary but also grammar a lot in class.”
- “Yes, because my teacher taught me my grammar mistakes in details.”

Many students said they learned a lot of grammar, especially from their mistakes that were corrected:

- “Yes, they did because the teacher corrected my grammar mistakes carefully.”
- “Yes. When my grammar wasn’t good, you corrected it, so I learned about grammar.”
- “Yes, I can notice my mistakes because teacher gives me a corrected paper.”
- “Yes. My teacher corrected my errors, so I could noticed my mistakes in grammar. I learned grammar from them.”
- “Yes. Because my teacher taught me a lot of grammar and corrected my mistakes.”
- “Yes. You put right my grammar mistakes, so it is very helpful.”
- “Yes, because I could check my grammar mistakes and know the right grammar.”
- “Maybe, yes. My paraphrasing exercises were checked and corrected, and that reminded me of my grammar errors.”
- “Yes, it did. My writing was corrected by Tammy. I realized that I didn’t realize the rule of articles. I want Tammy to correct more!!”

Paraphrasing and Vocabulary Skills

The fourth question was, “Did the paraphrasing exercises help you improve your vocabulary skills? Why?” One student said, “I’m not sure” and another said, “A little bit. When I did the exercises, I think about the sentence in my head, then make the sentence differently, so I just used vocabularies which I know well.” The rest of the students said yes. Many of the students said they learned a lot of new words, synonyms, idioms, and collocations by using their dictionaries:

- “Yes. I could use a synonym dictionary for the first time and I could learn a lot of words.”
- “Yes. Since I used my dictionary very much.”
- “Yes, I had to look up many synonyms. Also, I could enrich my vocabulary.”
- “Yes, they did, because I always used the same words, so by paraphrasing, I started to use many words.”
- “They did very much, and I enjoyed using a rich vocabulary in the exercises.”
- “Yes, they did, because I always used the same words, so by paraphrasing, I started to use many words.”
- “Yes. Because I was able to learn a lot of synonyms.”
- “Yes, because I looked up to my dictionary when I encountered new words I didn’t know.”
- “Yes. I could learn new words and idioms through the exercises.”
- “Yes. I’ve learned collocations and word choice in each situation because I carefully checked the dictionary.”
- “Yes, It’s necessary to have rich vocabulary for paraphrasing exercises.”

Two students also said they learned nuances of words:

- “Yes, I could learn that there are many words in same meaning and nuances are a little different.”
- “Yes, I had to use a lot of synonyms when I paraphrased. Besides, I could learn the nuance of each words and little differences between each words.”

Paraphrasing and Paraphrasing Skills

The fifth question was, “Did the paraphrasing exercises help improve your paraphrasing skills? Why?” All but five of the students said yes:

- “No, I think I have not paraphrased correctly yet.”
- “So-so”
- “A little.”
- “I have no opinion either way. I don’t have absolute confidence that my paraphrasing skills improved.”
- “It’s dubious for me, because I was often perplexed about how to rewrite sentences.”

Several students said it was their first time to do paraphrasing. Several mentioned they had become faster and better at paraphrasing the more they did them:

- “Maybe yes. Because at first, I only tried to change a word, but now I tried to change sentences.”
- “Yes, I could study the structure of sentences.”
- “Yes, they did, because it kept me thinking how many ways I could paraphrase.”
- “Yes, it did, because we grappled with it routinely.”

The paraphrasing exercises also helped students write essays:

- “Yes, I have become to always think about paraphrase when I’m writing English.”
- “Yes. It was helpful when I paraphrased the conclusion of the essays.”
- “Yes. I can practice many time and I could know how I can use it in writing essay.”
- “Yes. By the paraphrasing exercise, I learned how to paraphrase sentences and words. Then I can try to use it in homework essays.”

Possible Paraphrases

The sixth question was, “Was it helpful to be given possible

paraphrases? Why?” One student said, “Sorry I don’t know.” All the other students said yes. Students wrote the most detailed answers to this question:

- “Yes, it was very important for me. I can get good and correct paraphrases.”
- “Yes, it was because I could learn the way of thinking of native speakers.”
- “Yes, it was, because there were many special ways of expressing and that was exciting for me.”
- “Yes. Possible paraphrases that you gave us were excellent, so they were helpful.”
- “Yes. I was surprised a word could be changed in such ways.”
- “Yes, I want to know many sentences which are used paraphrase, because I know many paraphrases, I am stimulated that there’re a lot of paraphrases, not only one sentence.”
- “You gave us a lot of different answers. If we make mistakes, you correct those very carefully.”
- “Yes, Tammy gave us some examples and I could learn a lot of ways to paraphrase some sentences.”
- “Yes, I could realize paraphrases which I didn’t know or come up with.”
- Yes, because I could learn another English expression which I didn’t think of.”
- “Because there are some phrases Japanese can’t find even though we use dictionaries.”
- “Yes. It’s useful to know many patterns of paraphrases.”
- “Yes. Because I could learn the different way of paraphrasing which never occurred to me.”
- “Yes. Because those possible paraphrases can be used as a reference next time.”
- “Yes. Tammy teach us a lot of examples of right paraphrases. By knowing a lot of ways, I can get new knowledges about English vocabulary and grammar.”
- “I think it is useful, even if my paraphrasing is not so bad. Because in your handout, there are a wider variety of possible

paraphrases. To be a better writer, it is very important to write the sentence which has the same meaning in different ways. This always improve our writing skill.”

- “Yes, because it tell me useful grammar or vocabulary. I know natural way of saying. My electronic dictionary isn’t good.”
- “Yes. Because possible paraphrases which I didn’t thought of were good for a next paraphrasing exercise.”
- “Yes, it is great help to correct my own mistakes and learn other patterns of paraphrase.”
- “Yes, it was. I could learn the correct paraphrases and use it to the next exercise.”
- “Yes. Because I learned many ways of expression by possible paraphrases.”
- “Yes, so I could compare my sentences and example sentences.”
- “Yes. It is because I can find other possible answer as I can only know my answer. Sometimes both answers are different so it was very good to get the possible paraphrases.”
- “Yes. I could learn what was good or bad point in my paraphrases from possible paraphrases.”
- “Yes, it was really helpful for me because to know other’s way of paraphrasing inspired me and also gave me fresh sight.”
- “Yes, it was. It is necessary to be given them because if I can’t do good paraphrases, I can learn possible paraphrases from it. I want to know possible paraphrases.”

A Good Use of Class Time

The last question was, “Were the paraphrasing exercises a good use of class time? Why?” Only two students said no and the rest of the students said yes. Some students felt there was not enough time in class to do the exercises and that it was better to do the exercises as homework:

- “Maybe no. Because I need a lot of time to do it, I often could not finish it in the part of class time.”
- “No, it were not. I want to do it at home because it’s difficult to

do in class within short time.”

- “Yes, but I think it’s good to do these exercises at home as homework, and we correct and discuss about those in class because I think I could think and do better those exercises taking time at home.”

Several students said that the time to do the exercises was limited, and several said having a limited time made them concentrate more:

- “Yes. If I do in my home, it will take a lot of time. I should do it in limited time.”
- “Yes. Because I could concentrate upon it.”
- “Yes, they were, because I can concentrate on the work in a short time.”
- “Yes, I can concentrate on these things.”
- “Yes, they were because the time was limited.”
- “Yes. I had to write within a limited time. When I wrote it in my house, it takes much more time to write.”
- “Yes, they were, because it was important to do these exercises in limited time.”
- “Yes. I could concentrate my attention on work.”
- “Yes. We had to paraphrase with the limited time, and the limited time made us concentrate on our paraphrase exercise more.”
- “Yes, because I can concentrate on my work in class.”
- “Yes. Because the paraphrasing needs concentration.”
- “Yes. In a limited time, I can be concentrated in paraphrasing.”
- “Yes, it gives time to students, so they try hard to paraphrase them in class. Students would forget or do them roughly if the exercises were homework.”

Several students felt doing the exercises in class was a good use of time while I talked with each student individually about their essays:

- “Yes, we can do paraphrasing exercises while you talk about our essay with each students. It was very effective.”
- “Yes. Because we exercise the paraphrase when Tammy talk about essay with each students and we were waiting our turn. We had time and it was good to have the paraphrase to do in such time.”

- “Yes, they were, because it is efficient. When you and one student talked about something writing the others concentrated on own paraphrasing exercises.”
- “Yes. If I do not paraphrase, I was boring because other students and you were consulting.”
- “Yes. We students did those exercises while Tammy teach one-to-one, so it is a good use of class time, I think.”
- “I think it was. It was good to do it under the time pressure, and it was a good use of time during Tammy talked to each of us.”

Conclusion

I did not feel confident when I first started teaching students how to paraphrase. I didn't feel like the textbooks and website I was using helped me or the students understand the difficult process of paraphrasing. I wanted to create paraphrasing exercises so that students looked at paraphrasing in a new way, where they practiced changing vocabulary, grammar and word order to rewrite a sentence in several different ways but with the same meaning. I felt it was helpful to correct their mistakes, to give them possible paraphrases, and to analyze the grammar and vocabulary in the possible paraphrases. From the students' answers on the questionnaire, from the improvement I saw in their paraphrasing exercises each week, and from the paraphrasing they were able to do in their research papers, I feel the paraphrasing exercises I created helped them improve their paraphrasing skills. Now I feel more confident teaching paraphrasing.

This paper is dedicated to my students at Tsuda College and Sultan Qaboos University.

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