Investigating Students' Performance and Perception of Paraphrasing Techniques at Governmental and Private Sudanese Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at comparing Sudanese students of English as a foreign language(EFL)at governmental and private universities in performance and perception of paraphrasing techniques in order to see whether their performance is confined to their perception or not and if there are any differences between the two groups in their perception. The sample of the study has been chosen randomly from governmental and private universities in order to collect the necessary data. One hundred students did a paraphrasing test and completed a questionnaire. The researcher used descriptive analytical method by means of comparison and One-Way ANOVA.The results obtained revealed a mismatch between the participants' performance and perceptions. In addition, there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of perception. This study recommends adding sufficient research-related courses incorporating paraphrasing techniques to the curriculum, making explicit awareness of the importance of paraphrasing, and providing training and practice in paraphrasing techniques.

Keywords paraphrasing perception, foreign language learning, university student, paraphrasing performance

المستخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة الي المقارنة بين الاداء و الادراك فيما يختص اساليب اعادة صياغة بين طلاب الجامعات الحكومية والجامعات الخاصة السودانية الدارسين للغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية لرؤية مدي تطابق الاداء والادراك ولرؤية ما اذا كانت هنالك اختلافات بين المجموعتين فيما يخص الادراك .تم اختيار العينة اختيارا عشوائيا من جامعات الحكومية والخاصة السودانية لتجميع البيانات . كان عدد الطلاب السودانين المشاركين في هذا البحث مائة طالب وطالبة .ادي هؤلاء الطلاب اختبارا في اساليب اعادة الصياغة متلوا باستبانة.ثم من بعد ذلك تم تحليل البيانات تحليلا احصائيا بطريقة المقارنة وتحليل التباين الاحادي . ابانت النتائج الي وجود عدم تطابق بين الاداء والادراك لدي جميع الطلاب.بالاضافة الي ذلك لا فرق يوجد فيما يخص الادراك بين المجموعتين.اوصت الدراسة الي ادخال هذه الاساليب في المنهج والتوعية المباشرة بهذه الاساليب وادخالها في مناهج الكتابة الرسمية وتوفير تدريب وممارسة لهذه الاساليب .

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INTRODUCTION

Paraphrasing is one of the most important techniques in academic writing for English as foreign language learners (EFL).Campell (1998) defines paraphrasing as "Using different phrasing and wording to express a particular passage that was originally written or spoken by someone else in order to blend the others' ideas smoothly into one's own writing" (p.86).Paraphrasing covers a wide range of applications.Hirvela (2013) and Injai (2015) mention some of those applications. So, grasping this technique is crucial and vital for students. However, it is not easy and requires many skills and knowledge. And because of its complexity, a lot of problems have appeared into the scene which lead to many researches in the source and nature of these problems and how to overcome them. This study primarily intends to examine whether students' learning and teaching context has a role to play in their inappropriate performance and perception of paraphrasing i.e., whether governmental and private universities students' performance is confined to their perception or not. And whether they differ in their paraphrasing perception, considering their personal, cultural, and affective factors.

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SUST Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies (2019)   Vol.20.No. 2 June (2019)
ISSN (text): 1858-828x   e-ISSN (online): 1858-8565

Statement of the Problem

To investigate descriptions for students' inappropriate paraphrasing performance and perception, researchers have conducted studies using different methods, such as Shi (2012) ,Khrismawan and Widiati(2013), Oda and Yamamoto (2007),Tseng (2010),Roig(1999),Barker (1997), Deckert(1993),

 Loh(2013),andRusso& Pipa (2004). However, few studies have examined EFL students in college or higher education concerning their performance and perceptions of paraphrasing, and the factors which account for their inappropriate performance and perception of paraphrasing. Even few studies have investigated the relationship between learning and teaching contexts and the students' inappropriate paraphrasing performance and perception. Thus, this study aims to examine whether students' learning and teaching context plays an important role in their inappropriate perception of paraphrasing, i.e., whether governmental and private universities students' paraphrasing performance confines to their perception of paraphrasing or not and whether they are different in their perception of paraphrasing, bearing in mind the students' personal, cultural, and affective factors. If so, then this study supports the view that improving EFL learning and teaching context may contribute to the students' awareness of performance and perception of paraphrasing. In addition, the individual characteristics related to students' inappropriate paraphrasing performance and perception discovered in this work can inform EFL writing teachers of the students' major problems in order to effectively help them to avoid inappropriate paraphrasing performance and perception.

Literature Review

 A few of undergraduate students can display full knowledge of paraphrasing and carry out the process appropriately and successfully. Some of undergraduate students think that paraphrasing is difficult and requires knowledge of reading comprehension and academic writing as well as knowledge of paraphrasing types and techniques. For them, paraphrasing is a complex task. Those student study the process in a way or another .For example, they take the course as a pre-requisite for research methodology. So, they know what does paraphrasing mean and how to apply it in their writing; however their attitude towards it is that it is a real problem and they struggle a lot to do it. A third group of students undergo some courses about paraphrasing, but do not study it deeply, i.e. they know what it is and how it is used. Their knowledge of paraphrasing is rather superficial. So their attitudes towards it are neutral. A fourth group is a group of students who have no ideas about paraphrasing. Those students may hear about it, but do not know it. They are detached from it and, accordingly, their attitudes can not be detected. Following are some sources from the world of literature about how students perceive paraphrasing.

 Khrismawan &Widiati (2013) realize paraphrasing as amending the original source without stating the 'degree' of the amendment itself. Paraphrasing engaged reformulation of sentences or paragraphs into authors' own words while at the same time stressing the significance of maintaining the original idea. Lim and See (2001) explain that with respect to the pervasiveness of academic deception, their findings suggest that students are virtuously uncertain about academic deception and are rather open-minded of falsehood among their fellows.Deckert (1993) concludes that this group of English as a foreign language (EFL) students was unable to find out plagiarism in extracts of writing (as cited in Schwabl et al., 2013). Roig (1997) explains that many students do not have the knowledge necessary to decide if a passage had received acceptable paraphrasing or not (as cited in Schwabl et al., 2013).

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SUST Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies (2019)   **Vol.20.No. 2 June (2019)**
ISSN (text): 1858-828x   **e-ISSN (online): 1858-8565**

Ashworth et al., (2003) classify students into three classes

(a) A student who took an especially anxious line, his morality having to do with the fear of being shamed were to be accused of plagiarism in his work.

(b) A student who saw academic development as the movement from dependence on respected authors such that the novice's work is near plagiaristic, to autonomy and self-assured originality.

(c) A student whose degree involved painting and art history—disciplines with very distinct understandings of plagiarism .To conclude, students said the reason they still cheated even when they had proper skills was because it requires a lot of effort and time to write a paper honestly and with material readily available on the Internet, it is highly tempting to take the easy way out and copy and paste material to submit as one's original work. One student said "we have many other assignments that we have to do, so getting material from the Internet saves you a lot of time to do other things" .Batane(2010) explains that students reported that the other thing that encourages plagiarism is the tendency of lecturers to give the same essays and tests every year so it is very easy to get a previous student's assignment and copy from it.Pennycook (1996) shows that using another author's words is a form of respect for Chinese students, and it is hard for these students to change this cultural practice (as cited in Hayes & Introna, 2005). The context of learning differs from culture to culture. In western culture, for example, learners have to follow academic regulations rigorously. They highly consider ownership. This tradition started very early in history and prevails up to date. And this applies almost to all disciplines. From linguistic prospective, English language learners at university level must grasp paraphrasing skills and be able to carry out researches properly. However, there are differences across countries for many reasons and factors. One factor is culture.In academic circles across the globe, writing research papers must meet certain conventions, rules and conditions. One of these conventions is to paraphrase a text that would be involved in one's own piece of writing. It is essential because it protects the writer from being accused by plagiarism.These conventions, rules and conditions are considered differently by different cultures. In some cultures, like western cultures, they are applied rigorously and any violation to them is considered as an offence by law and there is a punishment for it. In other cultures, they might be overlooked, or learners might not know the consequences of offending these rules and conventions. For example, using one's own words to rewrite a text is considered rude. According to Hayes and Introna (2005),

...across all cultures, not only is copying several sentences likely to be endemic in coursework (or term paper) submissions, but also that regardless of background, students do not tend to judge it as an unacceptable practice .Moreover, some students even claimed that copying would facilitate their learning (p. 221).

Wheeler (2009) supports the view that some cultures accept using others' words as one's own without paraphrasing them .He says that although plagiarism is considered among western academic circles as one of the worst "crimes" a student can commit, many scholars suggest that these attitudes do not apply to students from areas outside this sphere. They believe that plagiarism is considered culturally acceptable in many countries. As such, ESL or EFL instructors in charge of students from these places must be sensitive to their backgrounds. Japan is often believed to be one of these countries in which plagiarism is not considered a moral violation. As the literature about paraphrasing shows, it is a skill job; it needs mastery of many language skills .Some of these skills are reading comprehension and academic writing. In addition, knowledge of the structure of the language plays a vital role in proper paraphrasing. So, the more proficient students are the lesser difficulties they encounter in paraphrasing. And the lower proficient students are the more difficulties they face in paraphrasing.Loh (2013) is one of the many researchers who are interested in the relationship between the level of students' second language proficiency and their competence in academic writing. He found out that ESL and EFL learners with 'low' proficiency produced many errors when they paraphrased.

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SUST Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies (2019)   **Vol.20.No. 2 June (2019)**
ISSN (text): 1858-828x   **e-ISSN (online): 1858-8565**

Those errors were classified as linguistics (grammar, syntax, and lexis), conventions (writing and paraphrasing), and semantics (content of message) produced by low English proficiency students. Likewise, students' language proficiency and their academic achievements can be predicted by their paraphrasing ability. Russo& Pipa (2004) explain that students who achieved high scores on the paraphrasing test were more successful in interpreting than students who had lower ability in paraphrasing. Students in high level of proficiency also applied complex strategies when composing particular tasks. Campbel(1990)and Pennycook(1994)explain that students' paraphrasing performance may be affected by their premature cognitive and language development. Lawful paraphrasing may be hindered by the students' narrowed writing 'competence' when they carry out researches in a second or a foreign language. Banwell (2003) made an investigation about how Chinese and South-East Asian students in a UK university viewed inadequate textual borrowing and academic deception and found that students are conscious of what plagiarism is, and understand the importance of presenting their ideas in their own words and using correct referencing and citation methods. Nevertheless, these students who were interviewed also pointed out that the way students studied or 'conducted' research in the United Kingdom was different from that in Asia, and that their limited English proficiency might prevent them from understanding the university requirements.

Straw(2002) argues that students of poorer academic performance incline to plagiarize more often than those of better academic performance(as cited in Liao and Tseng, 2010)

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Method of the Study

The researcher used descriptive analytical method by means of comparison and One-Way ANOVA to analyze the data. To run the comparison, the means of the students' answers of the test questions and of their responses to the questionnaire were taken and compared between the governmental and private universities. One-Way ANOVA was used to detect any differences between the two groups in the sense that if (p <.05) then there is a significant difference between the two groups and if (p >.05) then there

is no significant difference between the two groups.

Tools of Data Collection

The researcher designed a test and questionnaire to collect the needed data. The test consists of group of sentences which were used to test the participants' actual knowledge and performance in paraphrasing. The subjects were required to read the sentences carefully and then paraphrased the underlined and highlighted parts, which were chosen based on the different types and techniques of paraphrasing. The sentences were accompanied by techniques and types of paraphrasing in general terms as a guideline. The questionnaire consists of thirteen statements which were used to examine the participants' perceptions and understanding of paraphrasing and to assess the students' attitudes toward paraphrasing using a five- point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Sample of the Study

One hundred of Sudanese students at governmental and private universities participated in this study, fifty for each university. All of the participants learned paraphrasing and received formal English writing instruction for at least three years.

Procedures of Data Collection

Firstly, the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the test.An identification number was assigned to each of the participants in order to respond to the test and questionnaire anonymously. Then the participants received the test and were required to read the whole sentences thoroughly before they paraphrased them. The reading of the sentences and paraphrasing process took about 45 minutes. Once the paraphrasing task was completed, the participants were given 15 minutes to do the questionnaire.

Reliability of the Tools

Split-Half Methodology is used to account for the reliability of the test. The researcher divided the number of correct answers into even and odd. Microsoft Excel is used to calculate the correlation co efficient of the answers, and the reliability is 0.79 and Alpha Cronbach's correlation coefficient was used, with help of SPSS, to account for the reliability of the questionnaire which is 0.702.

Validity of the Tools

Before being administered, the tools were checked and revised by some experts, particularly associate professors of teaching English as a foreign language. They gave valuable advice and suggested some modifications to the tools which in turn help a lot in their validity. The tools were administered in similar settings, i.e. in similar time and place; in the same university and at the same time.
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Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the paraphrasing test and the questionnaire were analyzed by using the SPSS software package. Means comparison and One-Way ANOVA were used to compare the results of the test and the questionnaire between the governmental and private universities students. Following are the tables of the results of the test and the questionnaire

Table (1) Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Syntactic Paraphrasing

	Governmental Students				Private Students			
	Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers		Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers	
Paraphrasing Technique	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
1. Changing a sentence from active to passive.	15.0	21.21	10.00	14.14	16.0	22.63	9.00	12.73
2. Changing a sentence from passive to active.	16.5	23.34	8.50	12.02	11.50	16.26	13.5	19.09
3. Changing a positive phrase to negative.	17.0	24.04	8.00	11.31	14.00	19.80	11	15.56
4. Changing a negative phrase to positive.	20.0	28.28	5.00	7.071	19.00	26.87	6.00	8.485
5. Separating a long sentence into short sentences.	1.00	1.414	24.0	33.94	3.00	4.243	22.0	31.113
6. Expanding a phrase for clarity.	7.5	10.61	17.5	24.75	3.00	4.24	22.0	31.11
7. Condensing a phrase or a sentence.	5.0	7.071	20.0	28.28	3.00	4.24	22.0	31.11
8. Combining sentences to make one sentence.	12.0	16.97	13.00	18.39	13.00	18.39	12.0	16.97
9. Using varied sentence structure.	1.5	2.12	23.5	33.23	4.00	5.66	21.0	29.70
10. Change a relative clause to participle clause.	.50	.707	24.5	34.65	.50	.71	24.5	34.65

Table (1) above shows the means and standard deviations of the participants' syntactic paraphrasing. As we can see, the totals means of the governmental students' correct and incorrect answers are (95.5 and 132.5)respectively whereas the totals means of the private students' correct and incorrect answers are (87 and162) respectively.

Table (2) Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Semantic Paraphrasing

	Governmental Students				Private Students			
	Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers		Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers	
Paraphrasing Technique	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Changing parts of speech of words.	3.00	4.243	22.00	31.11	.50	.707	24.50	34.65
2. Using synonyms.	22.00	31.11	3.00	4.24	16.50	23.33	8.50	12.02
3. Changing numbers and percentages to words.	17.00	24.04	8.00	11.31	4.50	6.364	20.50	28.99
4. Explaining idiomatic expressions.	18.50	26.16	6.50	9.192	11.00	15.56	14.00	19.80
Total	**60**		**39.5**		**32.5**		**67.5**	

Table (2) above shows the means and standard deviations of the participants' semantic paraphrasing. As we can see, the totals means of the governmental students' correct and incorrect answers are (60 and 39.5) whereas the totals means of the private students' correct and incorrect answers are (32.5 and67.5) respectively.

Table (3) Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants'

Scale: 5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neutral; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly Disagree

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.I have practiced paraphrasing	100	3.28	1.207
2. I know how to paraphrase.	100	3.66	1.047
3. It is difficult for me to change a sentence from active to passive.	100	2.74	1.260
4. It is hard for me to change a sentence from passive to active.	100	2.83	1.288
5. I find it hard to change a phrase from positive to negative.	100	2.65	1.290
6. I find it difficult to rewrite a sentence into two sentences.	100	2.87	1.300
7.It is easy for me to expand a phrase for clarity	100	3.10	1.259
8. I have difficulties to begin a complex sentence with the dependent clause.	100	3.30	1.299
9. I find it easy to change relative clauses into participle clauses.	100	3.30	1.291
10. It is hard for me to change the part of speech of a word.	100	2.80	1.341
11. It is hard for me to use synonyms when paraphrasing.	100	3.00	1.333
12. It is easy for me to change words to percentages.	100	3.53	1.374
13. I have difficulties to change percentages to words.	100	2.87	1.300

Table (3) in the previous page shows the means and standard deviations of the participants' perceptions of paraphrasing. As we can see, the participants agreed with the statements(1,2,7,8,9,and12),and disagreed with the statements(3,4,5,6,10,and 13).For statement 11 they were neutral.

Table (4) One -Way ANOVA of the Perceptions between the Governmental and Private Universities' Students

Statement	Status	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. I have practiced paraphrasing.	Between Groups	.000	.000	1.000
2. I know how to paraphrase.	Between Groups	.360	.326	.569
3. It is difficult for me to change a sentence from active to passive.	Between Groups	9.000	5.950	.017
4. It is hard for me to change a sentence from passive to active.	Between Groups	3.610	2.204	.141
5. I find it hard to change a phrase from positive to negative.	Between Groups	.090	.054	.817
6. I find it difficult to rewrite a sentence into two sentences.	Between Groups	.090	.053	.819
7. It is easy for me to expand a phrase for clarity.	Between Groups	.640	.401	.528
8. I have difficulties to begin a complex sentence with the dependent clause.	Between Groups	1.000	.590	.444
9. I find it easy to change relative clauses into participle clauses.	Between Groups	.360	.214	.644
10. It is hard for me to change the part of speech of a word.	Between Groups	.360	.199	.657
11. It is hard for me to use synonyms when paraphrasing.	Between Groups	.000	.000	1.000
12. It is easy for me to change words to percentages.	Between Groups	3.610	1.930	.168
13. I have difficulties to change percentages to words.	Between Groups	2.250	1.336	.251

Table (4) in the previous page shows One -Way ANOVA of the perceptions between the governmental and private universities' students. As we can see, for all of the statements except statement (3), sigs or p-values are more than .05).

Table (5) Means and Standard Deviations of the Governmental and Private Students' Paraphrasing Perceptions

Statement	Governmental Students		Private Students	
	M	SD	M	SD
1.I have practiced paraphrasing	3.28	1.144	3.28	1.278
2. I know how to paraphrase.	3.60	1.030	3.72	1.070
3. It is difficult for me to change a sentence from active to passive.	2.44	1.280	3.04	1.177
4. It is hard for me to change a sentence from passive to active.	2.64	1.290	3.02	1.270
5. I find it hard to change a phrase from positive to negative.	2.68	1.332	2.62	1.260
6. I find it difficult to rewrite a sentence into two sentences.	2.90	1.344	2.84	1.267
7.It is easy for me to expand a phrase for clarity	3.18	1.207	3.02	1.317
8. I have difficulties to begin a complex sentence with the dependent clause.	3.20	1.278	3.40	1.325
9. I find it easy to change relative clauses into participle clauses.	3.24	1.364	3.36	1.225
10. It is hard for me to change the part of speech of a word.	2.74	1.322	2.86	1.370
11. It is hard for me to use synonyms when paraphrasing.	3.00	1.400	3.00	1.278
12. It is easy for me to change words to percentages.	3.72	1.457	3.34	1.272
13. I have difficulties to change percentages to words.	2.72	1.386	3.02	1.204

Table (5) in the previous page shows the means and the standard deviations of the governmental and private students' paraphrasing perceptions. As we can see, most of the means of the governmental and private students' perceptions are the same or slightly different. They are the same for the statements (1 and 11) and they are slightly different for the statements (2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12) .They are slightly different for only three statements. They are different for the statements (3, 4, and 13).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As we can see from table (1), syntactic paraphrasing is a problem for both groups; the total means of the incorrect answers is higher than the total means of correct answers (M=132.5 and M=95.5) for governmental university students and (M=162 and M=87) for private university students. Similar to the finding of previous studies (Roig, 1999; Loh, 2013),

students in this study have difficulty producing proper paraphrases because of the difficulties with the syntax of the target language. As we can see from table (2), semantic paraphrasing is a problem for private university students; the total means of the incorrect answers is higher than the total means of correct answers (M=67.5 compared to M=32.5), but it is not a problem for governmental

university students as the total means of the correct answers is higher than the total means of incorrect answers (M=60 compared to M=39.5).This difficulty corresponds to Chrismawan and Widiati's(2013);Roig's(1999)and; Loh's(2013)result that meaning preservation to be as equal as in the original is difficult for students.

As we can see from table (3), the top four statements with which participants agreed included the easiness to expand a phrase for clarity (statement 7) , the difficulties to begin a complex sentence with the dependent clause (statement 8), the easiness to change a relative clause to participle clause (statement 9),and the easiness to change words to percentages (statement 12).

The results of the study revealed a mismatch between the participants' performance and perceptions of paraphrasing techniques. Responding to the questionnaire, the participants tended to deny having difficulties to change a sentence from active to passive (statement 3), tended to disagree that it was hard for them to change a sentence from passive to active (statement 4), tended to deny having difficulties to rewrite a sentence into two sentences (statement 6),tended to agree that it was easy for them to change a relative clause into participle clause(statement 9) ,and tended to deny having hardness to change the part of speech of a word (statement10).

However, such beliefs were contradicted by their actual performance in the paraphrasing test. This aspect corresponds to Liao &Tseng's (2010) results that there was inconsistency between students' perceptions of paraphrasing and the actual act on paraphrasing.

As shown in table (4), a significant difference was disclosed between the governmental students' and private students' paraphrasing techniques perceptions in statement 3 (p <.05). Similar to the finding of previous studies (Banwell, 2003; Hayes & Introna, 2005), students in this statement varied in their perceptions of paraphrasing. For the other statements there was no significant difference 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12and 13(p >.05).

As table (5) shows, there is a significant difference for statement 3(M=2.44 and M=3.04) .For the rest of the questionnaire there was no significant difference. Based on statements 1 and 2, the extent to which the governmental students agreed on having practiced paraphrasing and knowing how to paraphrase in statements 1 and 2 (M=3.28 and M= 3.60) was the same for statement 1 and a little bit different for statement 2 of the private students (M= 3.28 and M= 3.72). Statements 5 and 6 showed that the degree to which the governmental students having denied to have difficulties to change a phrase from positive to negative and rewriting a sentence into two sentences (M= 2.68 and M= 2.90) was very near to that of the private students (M= 2.62 and M= 2.84). In addition, based on statements 9 and 10, the extent to which the governmental students agreed that they find it easy to change relative clauses into participle clauses or tended to deny having hardness to change the part of speech of a word (M= 3.24 and M= 2.74) was very near to that of the private students (M=3.36 and M= 2.86).

7. CONCULSION

Based on the data analysis and discussion the following findings are revealed.

1. All the participants haphazardly agreed that it is easy to expand a phrase for clarity, to change a relative clause into participle clause, and change words to percentages, but it is difficult to begin a complex sentence with the dependent clause.

2. There is a mismatch between the students' perceptions of paraphrasing techniques and their actual performance.

3. There is no significant difference between governmental university students' and private university students' paraphrasing techniques perceptions.

8. Recommendations

Based on the results above, the following points have been recommended.

1. Students should have the knowledge necessary to decide if a technique of paraphrasing is easy or not.

2. Explicit awareness of the importance of paraphrasing strategies should be made part of E.F.L writing classes.

3. Continuous practice in paraphrasing strategies is important for E.F.L students' application of what they know to their writing.

4. All students should be aware of their paraphrasing perceptions and that they match their performance.

5. Sufficient research-related courses incorporating paraphrasing techniques to be added to the curriculum.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Studies that interview EFL students about their performance and perceptions of paraphrasing.

2. The influence of course materials on the students' paraphrasing performance and perceptions.

3. The effect of teaching strategies on the students' paraphrasing performance and perceptions

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