



Investigating Students' Performance 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 of paraphrasing techniques in order to find the differences between the two groups and the factors behind their paraphrasing techniques problems. One hundred students were chosen randomly from governmental and private universities. The researcher designed a diagnostic test in order to gather the needed data. The researcher used descriptive analytical method by means of comparison and One-Way ANOVA. The obtained results revealed a significant difference between the governmental and private universities students. Private university students did not perform well as governmental university students. The possible reason for this could be the private university students' insufficient knowledge and practice of paraphrasing strategies. This study recommends adding sufficient research-related courses incorporating paraphrasing to the curriculum, making explicit awareness of the importance of paraphrasing, and providing training and practice in paraphrasing.

Keywords: paraphrasing performance, differences, foreign language learning, university student.

المستخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة الي مقارنة الاداء فيما يختص اساليب اعادة صياغة بين طلاب الجامعات الحكومية والجامعات الخاصة السودانية الدارسين للغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية لمعرفة ما اذا كانت هنالك اختلافات بين المجموعتين ولمعرفة العوامل المؤدية الي الصعوبات في استخدام هذه الاساليب . كان عدد الطلاب المشاركين في هذا البحث مائة طالب وطالبة تم اختيارهم عشوائيا من الجامعات الحكومية والخاصة. ادي هؤلاء الطلاب اختبارا تشخيصيا في اساليب اعادة الصياغة. تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي باستخدام المقارنة وتحليل التباين الاحادي لتحليل البيانات. ابانت النتائج المتحصل عليها الي وجود فرق واضح بين المجموعتين في الاداء. طلاب الجامعة الخاصة لم يؤدوا بنفس الكيفية التي ادي بها طلاب الجامعة الحكومية. السبب في ذلك يرجع الي قلة المعرفة والممارسة الكافية لتلك الاساليب. اوصت الدراسة الي ادخال هذه الاساليب في المنهج والتوعية المباشرة بهذه الاساليب وادخالها في مناهج الكتابة الرسمية وتوفير تدريب وممارسة لهذه الاساليب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اداء اسلوب اعادة الصياغة، اختلافات، تعلم لغة اجنبية، طالب جامعي.

INTRODUCTION

No body denies the importance of paraphrasing in academic writing and in sentence in such a way that both sentences would be perceived as equal in

many language's aspects. McCarthy et al., (2009) defines it as rephrasing of a terms of semantics, but they are different in terms of vocabulary and syntax. It is

used in a wide range of applications as stated by Injai (2015) and Hirvela (2013), for example. Therefore, mastering this technique is worth and vital for students. However, it is difficult and needs many skills and knowledge. And due to its complexity, a lot of problems have emerged into the scene. This study is designed to examine whether students' learning and teaching context plays a role in their inappropriate performance of paraphrasing i.e., whether governmental and private universities students differ in their performance of paraphrasing. In addition, the study seeks to pinpoint the factors behind paraphrasing difficulties, considering students' personal, cultural, and affective factors.

Statement of the Problem

To investigate descriptions for students' inappropriate paraphrasing performance, 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), and Russo & Pipa (2004). However, few studies have examined EFL students in college or higher education concerning their performance of paraphrasing, and the factors which account for their inappropriate performance in paraphrasing. Even few studies have investigated the relationship between learning and teaching contexts and the students' inappropriate paraphrasing

It represents a barrier for E.F.L and E.L.S learners. It requires knowledge of syntax and semantics of the second or foreign

performance. Thus, this study aims to examine whether students' learning and teaching context plays a role in their inappropriate performance of paraphrasing, i.e., whether governmental and private universities students differ in their performance of paraphrasing. In addition, the study seeks to find the factors behind paraphrasing problems 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' performance in paraphrasing. Moreover, the individual characteristics related to students' inappropriate paraphrasing performance 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.

Literature Review

Learning a second language or a foreign language by itself is problematic. Second or foreign language learners encounter a language that is different from their native language in many respects. This dissimilarity between the languages causes difficulties or challenges for the learners. Many studies in contrastive linguistics show that when the languages are different learners usually face obstacles in learning second or foreign language. Paraphrasing is not an exception.

language. In addition, paraphrasing types and techniques complicate the matter. So these English branches are the main

sources of paraphrasing problems. In addition to the sources above, there are other sources which will be explained by some studies. Shi (2012) carried a study which reveals that university students face challenges in comprehending the ways to do paraphrasing. The main factor appears to be student's knowledge of the original content. This requires ability to understand sources text which is very important and greatly impacts paraphrasing performance. Khrismawan and Widiati (2013) examined students' perceptions about paraphrasing and their cognitive processes in paraphrasing. The participants were 4 Indonesian students of a graduate program of English teaching. They were required to do concurrent verbal report while paraphrasing 3 sentences and 1 paragraph. In the scope of definition, students were able to define what paraphrasing means. In the scope of purpose, there were varieties of responses; some students mentioned that paraphrasing was very important to avoid plagiarism while some other students said that it was employed in order to simplify the original text. For the reason why paraphrasing was so difficult, students stated that it was the result of preserving original meaning and the sufficient ability to paraphrase as well. All participants realized that skill, competence, and knowledge are highly required for effective paraphrasing. Moreover, sufficient paraphrasing ability is another

potential factor. To paraphrase effectively, skill, competence and knowledge are eminently needed. In another study in Japan Oda and Yamamoto (2007) proposed "Paraphrasing: an Essential Tool for EAP". They attempted to figure out the issue of paraphrase among Japanese university students. The participants were 32 students who enrolled in Reading and Content Analysis course. The data triangulation was employed in this study; interview section, questionnaire and paraphrasing task were provided to students. The result showed that 71% of participants had not learned how to paraphrase before. They were unfamiliar with the idea of paraphrasing; some students had no idea on the meaning of paraphrasing. Most students strongly agreed that paraphrasing was difficult and some of them did not have an experience before. The amount of the students who are familiar with the experience of paraphrasing is very small. Some students could not explain the exact meaning of paraphrasing. The majority of the students agree that paraphrasing is remarkably difficult. Liao & Tseng (2010) carried out study in Taiwan and whose focus was about students' behaviors and views of paraphrasing in an E.F.L academic context. The results showed that there was inconsistency between students' perceptions of paraphrasing and the actual act on paraphrasing. This inconsistency can be discerned as a factor that affects paraphrasing.



Paraphrasing performance is affected by text readability and familiarity with sentence structures and words that appear in the source text. Roig(1999) argues that with easy to comprehend sentences, students' paraphrases may have fewer plagiarized sections whereas the difficult to understand texts may cause problems for the students and may result in many plagiarized sections (as cited in Liao&Tseng2010).Therefore, production of proper paraphrases may be difficult for students when a text is out of reach for their level of comprehension. Kirkland and Saunders(1991),Pecorari(2003),and Barker(1997) argue that students whose culture 'privileges' learning by heart and memorization are predisposed to repeat from sources and that plagiarism may be seen as a kind of positive cooperation by students from a collectivist culture. In addition, Deckert (1993) explains that rote learning is taken to be an important base line of learning in eastern society .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. 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) argue that students who gained 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 aware of what plagiarism is, and understand the importance of presenting their ideas in their own words and using correct referencing and citation methods.Nonetheless, thesestudents 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). 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 Inrona (2005), *...across all cultures, not only is copying several sentences likely to be endemic in*

Tools of Data Collection

The researcher designed a test to collect the needed data. The

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 in many countries, plagiarism is considered culturally acceptable. 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.

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 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.

test consists of a 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.

Sample of the Study

One hundred of undergraduate Sudanese students at governmental and private universities participated in this study, fifty for each university.

All of the participants had learned paraphrasing and had received formal English writing instructions for at least three years. An identification number was assigned to each of the participants in order to respond to the test and questionnaire anonymously.

Procedures of Data Collection

The researcher first explained to the participants the goal and the procedure of the study. 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.

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 coefficient of the answers and the reliability was 0.79.

Validity of the Tools

Before being administered, the instrument had been checked and revised by some experts, particularly associate professors of teaching English as a foreign language. They gave valuable advice which made it valid. The subjects were asked to do the tasks without giving much attention to the purpose of the test; in other words they performed spontaneously. The experiment was done in similar settings, i.e. in similar time and place; in the same university and at the same time.

Data Analysis

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

Table (1) Means and Standard Deviations of the students' test at Governmental and Private Universities

Participants	Correct Answer				Incorrect Answer			
	N	%	M	SD	N	%	M	SD
Governmental	7	58.33	36	4.726	7	43.75	41.29	8.361
Private	5	41.67	31.40	4.669	9	56.25	40.89	8.069
Total	12	100			16	100		

Table (1) above shows the means and the standard deviations of the students' test at governmental and private universities. As we can see, the means of the governmental students' correct and incorrect answers are (36 and 41.29) respectively. The means of the private students' correct and incorrect answers are (31.40 and 40.89) respectively.

	Governmental Students				Private Students			
	Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers		Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Paraphrasing Technique								
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 (2) 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) whereas the totals means of the private students' correct and incorrect answers are (87 and 162) respectively.

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

Type of University	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Governmental	18.78	50	6.662
Private	14.40	50	8.908
Total	16.59	100	8.129

Table (3) above shows the means and the standard deviations of the participants' paraphrasing performance. The mean and the standard deviation of the governmental students are (18.78 and 6.662) respectively whereas the mean and the standard deviation of the private students are (16.59 and 8.129) respectively.

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

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Students Marks *	Between Groups (Combined)	479.610	1	479.610	7.753	.006
	Within Groups	6062.580	98	61.863		
	Total	6542.190	99			

Table (4) above shows the One -Way ANOVA of the performance between governmental and private universities students. As it shows, the p-value is .006 and shows a significant difference because it is less than 0.05.

Table (5) Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Semantic Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing Technique	Governmental Students				Private Students			
	Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers		Correct Answers		Incorrect Answers	
	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 (5) 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 and 67.5) respectively.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

As we can see from table (1), paraphrasing test done by the governmental students was slightly better than that done by the private students, either with correct or incorrect answers (M=36, 41.29) respectively by governmental students, and (M= 31.40, 40.89) respectively by private). As we can see from table (2), 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. In addition, governmental university students were better than private university students in their performance because the total means of their correct answers is a bit higher than private university students (M=95.5 and M= 87) respectively. With respect to changing a sentence from active to passive, private university students were a slightly better than governmental university students in their correct answers (M=16 and M=15) respectively. For changing a sentence from passive to active, we can see that governmental university students were better than private university students in their correct answers (M=16 and M=11.5).With regard to changing a phrase from positive to negative, we can notice that governmental university students performed better (M=17 for the governmental correct answers compared to M=14 for private correct answers).In the area of changing a negative phrase to positive, we can see that governmental university students were slightly better than private university students(M=20 for the governmental correct

answers compared to M=19 for private correct answers. Considering separating a long sentence into short sentences, private university students performed better than governmental university students (M=3 and M= 1) for their correct answers respectively. Regarding expanding a phrase for clarity, governmental university students did better than private university students (M=7.5 and M=3) for their correct answers .With respect to condensing a phrase or a sentence, we can see that governmental university students were better than private university students (M=5 and M=3) for their correct answers. In the area of combining sentences to make one sentence, we can see that private university students were slightly better than governmental university (M=13 and M=12) for their correct answers .When it comes to using varied sentences structure, we can see that private university students were better than governmental university students (M=4and M=1.5) for their correct answers respectively. Considering changing a relative clause to participle clause, both governmental and private university students were the same in their performance (the mean for the correct answer is the same for the two groups (M=.50).Moreover, the easiest technique of paraphrasing for the two groups is changing a negative phrase to positive because it has the highest means of the all means (M=20 and M=19).The most difficult technique is changing a relative clause to participle clause because it has the lowest means of the all means (M=.5 and M=.5).The difficulty decreases as we move from separating a long sentence into short sentences, using varied sentence structure, condensing a phrase or a sentence, expanding a phrase for clarity, combining sentences to make one sentence, changing a sentence from active to passive

,changing a sentence from passive to active to changing a positive phrase to negative.(M=1, M=1.5, M=5, M=7, M=12, M=16, M=16 and M=17) for the correct answers of the two groups. As we can see from table (3), the mean of governmental students is higher than that of private students (M=18.78 and M=14.40) which shows a significant difference between the two groups. As table (4) shows, there is a significant difference between governmental and private students in their paraphrasing performance $p=0.006$ ($p < .05$). As we can see from table (5), 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 Chismawan 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. In addition, governmental university students were better than private university students in their performance as the total means of their correct answers was, approximately, double of private university students (M=60 and M= 32.5) respectively. With respect to changing parts of speech of words, governmental university students were better than private university students in their correct answers (M=3 and M=.5) respectively. For using synonyms, we can see that governmental university students were better than private university students in their correct answers (M=22 and

M=16). With regard to changing numbers and percentages to words, we can notice that governmental university students performed better (M=17 for the governmental correct answers compared to M=4.5 for private correct answers). In the area of explaining idiomatic expression, we can see that governmental university students were better than private university students (M=18 for the governmental correct answers compared to M=11 for private correct answers). Moreover, the easiest technique of paraphrasing for the two groups is using synonyms as it has the highest means of the all means of the correct answers (M=22 and M=11). Furthermore, the most difficult technique is changing the parts of speech of words as it has the lowest means of the all means of the correct answers (M=3 and M=.5). The difficulty decreases as we move from changing numbers and percentages to words to explaining idiomatic expressions. (M=17, and M=18.5) for the correct answers of the two groups.

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

1. There is a significant difference between governmental university students' and private university students' paraphrasing techniques performance.
2. Governmental university students were better than private university students in their performance.
3. Syntactic paraphrasing is a problem for the two groups (governmental and private universities students).
4. The easiest syntactic technique of paraphrasing for the two groups is changing a negative phrase to positive.



5. Semantic paraphrasing is a problem for private university students.

6. The easiest semantic technique of paraphrasing for the two groups is using synonyms.

7. The most difficult semantic technique is changing the parts of speech of words.

8. The most difficult syntactic technique is changing a relative clause to participle clause.

Recommendations

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

1. Sufficient research-related courses incorporating paraphrasing strategies should be added to the curriculum to better equip students with the knowledge they require to overcome this problem.

2. Training and practice in paraphrasing strategies should be introduced at the early stage of the students' paraphrasing writing.

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

4. Paraphrasing strategies should be taught clearly in class.

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

6. Special focus and training should be made to syntactic paraphrasing strategies.

7. Intensive training is very important for private universities E.F.L students.

Suggestions for Further Studies

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

2. Possible factors behind syntactic difficulties for EFL students when they deal with paraphrasing.

3. The influence of course materials on the students' paraphrasing performance.

4. The effect of teaching strategies on the students' paraphrasing performance.

5. The impact of the Internet on the students' paraphrasing performance.

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