MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

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AN INVESTIGATION IN PARAPHRASING EXPERIENCED BY VIETNAMESE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Field: The English Language

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M.A. THESIS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(A summary)

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

The research title "An investigation in paraphrasing experienced by Vietnamese students of English in academic writing" was chosen in order to bring awareness not only to Vietnamese students of English, but also to teachers of English, about how to teach English and how to paraphrase the original sources effectively and to find methods to help students achieve better ways of paraphrasing.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims: This study aims to investigate how Vietnamese students of English paraphrase in academic writing, and to suggest solutions to improve paraphrasing skills for fourth-year students in the College of Foreign Languages-University of Da Nang.

1.2.2. Objectives : There are four objectives in the study:

- Describe/identify common mistakes of paraphrasing in academic writing.

- Predict possible mistakes by students when paraphrasing (at word &phrase, sentence and paragraph levels) in academic writing.

- Find out reasons why they perform badly.

- Suggest some implications for teaching and learning the problematic paraphrasing skills.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Due to the limitation of time and resource, the investigation will be restricted to the fourth-year students studying at the College

of Foreign Languages-University of Da Nang on paraphrasing of word & phrase, sentence and paragraph levels.

1.4. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. What are strategies to create a good paraphrase?

2. Which mistakes do students often make when paraphrasing (at word & phrase, sentence and paragraph levels)?

3. What are possible causes of mistakes?

4. What are effective ways and activities that teachers of English at colleges can apply to correct common mistakes and improve students' paraphrasing skill in academic writing?

5. What are paraphrasing techniques that Vietnamese students of English can use to improve their paraphrasing skill in their academic writing?

1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 "Introduction"

Chapter 2 "Literature Review"

Chapter 3 "Research Design and Methodology"

Chapter 4 "Findings and Discussions"

Chapter 5 "Conclusions and Recommendation"

Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. PREVIOUS STUDIES

- Jan Frodesen, University of California-Santa Barbara, in his work "a pre-paraphrasing mini-lesson" to develop paraphrasing skills in high school

- The handout by Matthew Hedstrom, Undergraduate Writing Center, University of Texas at Austin [39]

- Authors of series of Toefl Ibt. [14], [18], [21],

- Purdue OWL [40]

- Ahn Michelle [June, 1999], on his research *How Do I Teach My Students to Paraphrase Academic Content in Order to Improve Their Reading Comprehension*

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
2.2.1. Definition of Paraphrase
2.2.2. Kinds of Paraphrase
2.2.2.1. Changing Structure and Grammar
a) Active versus passive
b) Positive versus negative
c) Long sentence to short sentences
d) Expand phrases for clarity
e) Shorten phrases for conciseness
2.2.2.2. Changing Word
a) Changing Word Order
b) Changing Parts of Speech
1) Paraphrase using synonyms
2) Paraphrase using definitions

3) Paraphrasing using antonyms
*2.2.2.3. Changing Structure of Idea*s
2.2.3. Paraphrase Paragraphs
2.2.4. Reasons for Paraphrasing
2.2.4.1. Differences between Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing
2.2.4.2. Reasons for Paraphrasing
1) It is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage.
2) It helps you control the temptation to quote too much.
3) The mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original.
4) You could rewrite the original text in another way or style by changing the words, the sentence structure or the order of ideas to help your readers or listeners understand the original more easily.
2.2.5. Mistakes in Paraphrasing Skill
2.2.5.1. Mistakes in Changing Words
2.2.5.2. Mistakes in Changing Word Order or Structure
2.2.5.3. Mistakes in Changing Grammar
2.2.5.4. Mistakes in Changing Order of Ideas
2.2.5.5. Original Text and Plagiarism
a) Plagiarism and Types of Plagiarism
Definition of Plagiarism
Types of Plagiarism
    1) Outright Copying
    2) Paraphrase plagiarism
    3) Patchwork plagiarism
    4) Stealing an apt term

b) Avoiding Plagiarism

2.2.6. Strategies to Create a Good Paraphrase

2.2.6.1. Criteria for Good Paraphrasing

• Include all important ideas mentioned in the original passage but not in the same order.

• Keep the length approximately the same as the original.

• Do not stress any single point more than another.

• Do not change the meaning by adding your own thoughts or views.

• Do not use the original sentence structure.

2.2.6.2. Tips for Paraphrasing

STEP 1: Read the original passage several times until you understand it fully.

STEP 2: Write your paraphrase from memory. Include as much of the information as you remember. Do not look at the original while you are writing.

STEP 3: Check your paraphrase against the original for accuracy and completeness. **If necessary, add points you have missed.**

STEP 4: Name the source of the original passage in parentheses at the end of your paraphrase [13].

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The research is a descriptive study using qualitative and quantitative information.

3.2. DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION AND SAMPLES

3.2.1. Population

The fourth-year students and the Graduation Papers of graduates of the Da Nang College of Foreign Languages.

3.2.2. Sample

3.2.2.1. The Diagnostic Test (Part A: Word and Phrase level; Part B: Sentence level and Part C: Paragraph level).

3.2.2.2. Questionnaire consisting of 15 questions

3.2.2.3. The Graduation Papers (15 Graduation Papers)

3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.3.1. Data Collection

The Diagnostic Test, Questionnaire and 15 Graduation Papers were the main sources of data.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

The Questionnaire was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively into 4 categories:

1. Students' ability to learn paraphrasing skills

2. Students' preference and difficulties of paraphrasing

3. Students' awareness of, and avoidance of plagiarism

4. Students' improvement of paraphrasing skills

The Diagnostic Test was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to determine mistakes, then these mistakes were

classified into 3 categories: word & phrase, sentence and paragraph levels. At each level, mistakes were classified according to 5 types of mistakes in paraphrasing skills.

The Graduation Papers were read thoroughly to collect paraphrased paragraphs and their origins; then were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to determine mistakes; next, these mistakes were classified into category 1: paragraph level. Then they were classified as mistakes in paraphrasing skills.

Chapter 4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. OVERVIEW

4.2. RESULTS

4.2.1 Data Collected from Students' Questionnaire

4.2.1.1. Students' Awareness of Paraphrasing Skills

Table 4.1. Students' Awareness of Paraphrasing Skills

Awareness	What is paraphrase	Right	**73%**
		Wrong	**26%**
		Other	**1%**
	Kinds of paraphrase	One	**8%**
		Two	**30%**
		Three	**32%**
		Four	**21%**
		Do not remember	**9%**
	Differences between quoting, summarizing and paraphrasing	Yes	**49%**
		No	**11%**
		Not sure	**40%**

4.2.1.2. Students' Preference and Difficulties of Paraphrasing

Table 4.2. Students' Preference and Difficulties of Paraphrasing

Preference	Changing word	**43%**
	Changing sentence structure	**47%**
	Changing structure of ideas	**40%**
	Changing word order	**13%**
	Word level	**22%**
	Phrase level	**36%**
	Sentence level	**46%**
	Paragraph level	**20%**
Difficulties	Changing structure of ideas	**60%**
	Changing word order	**8%**
	Changing sentence structure	**29%**
	Changing word	**11%**
	Other	**1%**

4.2.1.3. Students' Awareness of Plagiarism and Its Avoidance

Table 4.3. Students' Awareness of Plagiarism and Its Avoidance

Plagiarism	Awareness	Definition	Right	**86%**
			Wrong	**10%**
			Do not know	**4%**
		Types of plagiarism	One	**17%**
			Two	**44%**
			Three	**22%**
			Four	**11%**
			Do not know	**6%**
	Ways to Avoid	Take notes in your own words	**22%**	
		Acknowledge quotations	**10%**	
		Be explicit about using ideas of other people	**13%**	
		All of the above	**56%**	

4.2.1.4. Students' Improvement of Paraphrasing Skills

Table 4.4. Students' Improvement of Paraphrasing Skills

Improvement	Students' ways	Reading more books	49%
		Practicing more exercises	51%
		Asking for teachers' help	13%
		Studying and discussing with friends	20%
	Teachers' help	Explaining more	20%
		Giving more exercises	19%
		Working and discussing in groups	3%
		All of the above	60%

4.2.2. Data Collected from the Diagnostic Test

4.2.2.1. Mistakes in Paraphrasing at Word & Phrase Level Made by the Fourth – year Students .

Table 4.5. Percentage of Acceptable and Unacceptable Answers at Word & Phrase Level

Phrase & word level		
Choosing the words or phrases with the same meaning	Acceptable answer	Unacceptable answer
1*	86%	14%
2	76%	24%
3	56%	44%
4	65%	35%
5	46%	54%
Replacing the underlined words by their synonyms	Acceptable answer	Unacceptable answer
6	43%	57%
7	37%	63%
8	35%	65%
9	11%	89%
10	78%	22%

* 1 – 10: the order of 10 sentences in part A in the Diagnostic test

4.2.2.2. *Mistakes in Paraphrasing at Sentence Level Made by the Fourth – year Students*

Table 4.6. Percentage of Acceptable and Unacceptable Answers (section I) at Sentence Level

Sentence level		
Choosing the best paraphrase for each sentence	Acceptable answer	Unacceptable answer
1*	**16%**	**84%**
2	**40%**	**58%**
3	**34%**	**62%**
4	**30%**	**68%**
5	**60%**	**36%**

* 1 -5: the order of 5 sentences in section I of part B in the Diagnostic test

Table 4.7. Percentage of Common Mistakes (section II) at Sentence Level

Sentence level	Kinds of mistake	Percentage of mistake
Paraphrase into two different ways	Changing word	**33.2%**
	Changing grammar & structure	**16%**

Table 4.8. Percentage of Common Mistakes (section III) at Sentence Level

Sentence level	Successful	Unsuccessful	Mistakes	Percentage of mistake
Extract three ideas from each complex sentence	**44.8%**	**55.2%**	Changing word	**24%**
			Changing structure & grammar	**16.4%**

4.2.2.3. *Mistakes in Paraphrasing at Paragraph Level Made by the Fourth – year Students*

4.2.2.3.1. Data Collected from Diagnostic Test

Table 4.9. Percentage of Acceptable & Unacceptable Answers (section I) at Paragraph Level

Paragraph level		
Choosing the best paraphrase for each paragraph	Acceptable answer	Unacceptable answer
	34.5%	**65.5%**

Table 4.10. Percentage of Common Mistakes (section II) at Paragraph Level

Paragraph level	Kinds of mistake		Percentage of mistake
Paraphrase in your own ways	Changing word		**22.5%**
	Changing structure & grammar		**40%**
	Changing order of idea		**0%**
	Plagiarism	Word-for-word	**0%**
		Paraphrase	**0%**
		Patchwork	**15%**
		Stealing an apt term	**0%**

4.2.2.3.2. Data Collected from Graduation Papers

Table 4.11. Percentage of common mistakes at paragraph level

Paragraph level		
Kinds of Plagiarism	Word-for-word	**20%**
	Paraphrase	**40%**
	Patchwork	**13%**
	Stealing an apt term	**6.6 %**

4.3. RESULT DISCUSSIONS

4.3.1. To What Extent are the Fourth-year Students of English at the Da Nang College of Foreign Languages Aware of Paraphrasing Skill? *(data collected from the Questionnaire)*

4.3.2. **What Kinds of Mistakes do the Fourth-year Students of English at the Da Nang College of Foreign Languages usually Make?** *(data collected from the Diagnostic test)*

4.3.3. What Kinds of Mistakes do the Graduated Students of English at the Da Nang College of Foreign Languages usually Make in their Graduation Papers? *(data collected from Graduation papers)*

4.4. SUGGESTED EXERCISES FOR PRACTICING PARAPHRASING

4.4.1. Exercise 1: *(Word & Phrase level)*

4.4.2. Exercise 2: *(Sentence level)*

4.4.1. Exercise 3: *(Paragraph level)*

Chapter 5
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at examining and determining the mistakes in paraphrasing skills made by fourth – year students at the College of Foreign Languages at Da Nang University, as well as helping both Vietnamese teachers and students to approach these skills more effectively. Four research questions and four hypotheses were set out to fulfill these objectives. Following are the main findings from the investigation.

Firstly, the study outlined the definition as well as the main kinds of paraphrasing. Comparison of three types of borrowing ideas - quoting, summarizing and paraphrasing - are taken into consideration by the researcher to help students easily distinguish between them. Common mistakes in paraphrasing in academic writing were analysed, helping the researcher to formulate a basic theory. In particular, strategies for good paraphrasing were also addressed.

Secondly, by means of a Questionnaire and Diagnostic Test administered to the fourth–year English Language students at the College of Foreign Languages, as well as analysis of Graduation Papers, we have gathered data on students' attitudes toward paraphrasing, plagiarism and their awareness in improving these skills, and avoiding plagiarism.

The kinds of mistakes they made were identified with an exploration of the reasons for those mistakes. It was evident that the students were motivated to learn paraphrasing skills, however, both objective

and subjective reasons had prevented their progress in this area. Insufficients time devoted to practice more exercises on paraphrasing when they did not pay much attention to paraphrasing, especially, at paragraph level.

Consequently, they could paraphrase quite well at word level and sentence level by replacing words with synonyms, antonyms and defining expressions, and changing structure by starting at different places. However students were very confused by whole paragraphs, as they did not always understand the whole content of the original passage, so were unable to retain all the main ideas in the paraphrased one. In addition, they were confused by paraphrasing methods at this level. Hence, the tendency was to plagiarize and patchwork the original.

Thirdly, basing on the kinds of mistakes that predominated, we would also like to suggest some strategies for teachers and students to teach and study paraphrasing skills more effectively.

Finally, both teachers and students should give more attention to these kinds of skills, as an aid to language acquisition in general and the English language in particular.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, the awareness of the fourth-year students of paraphrasing skills was very high. This was expressed by **73%** giving the right definition and **52%** presenting the correct four kinds of paraphrasing. Most of them (**59%**) clearly indicated the differences between paraphrasing, summarizing and quoting.

Secondly, in terms of *students' preference and difficulties in paraphrasing*, we could see that **47%** of the students preferred *changing sentence structure*, **43%** liked *changing word*, and **40%**

preferred *changing structure of ideas* in their paraphrasing, whereas, **46%** of the students liked paraphrasing at *sentence level* and **36%** preferred *phrase level.* Most of them did not like paraphrasing at paragraph level (**20%**). Turning to difficulties in this sub-skill, **60%** met difficulties in *changing structure of ideas* in their paraphrasing. A few of them had difficulty in *changing word order* (**8%**).

Thirdly, with regard to *students' awareness of plagiarism and its avoidance,* we can see that the number of correct answers was very high. **96%** presented the right definition, **44%** gave the right types of plagiarism and **56%** indicated the right ways to avoid this mistake.

Finally, with reference to *students' improvement of paraphrasing skills*, **51%** indicated *practicing more exercises* and **49%** *reading more books on paraphrasing* as their best ways to improve this sub-skill. When asked what kind of help they needed from their teacher, **60%** responded that they needed their teacher to *explain, to give more exercises and to give them team-work exercises* in paraphrasing.

In the Diagnostic Test, we drew three conclusions.

Firstly, in terms of *word and phrase level*, the number of students giving the right answer in *multiple-choice* exercises was higher than that in *replacing synonyms*.

Secondly, at sentence level, in the first section with multiple-choice exercises, the highest percentage of right answers was in the sentence in which *changing word order* and *replacing words* took place (**60%**) whereas the lowest rate was in the sentence with *changing sentence structure* (**16%**). Also, at this level, in the second section, when the students were asked to paraphrase each given

sentence in two different ways, there were **50.8%** giving successful answers. The most common mistakes at this section were *changing word* (**33.2%**) and *changing grammar and structure* (**16%**). In the third section of this level, when the students were asked to extract three ideas from each complex sentence, there were **44.8%** showing successful answers. The most common mistakes at this section were also *changing word* (**24%**) and *changing grammar and structure* (**16.4%**).

Thirdly, at paragraph level, in the first section with multiple-choice exercise, there were **34.5%** giving acceptable answers. In the second section of this level, when the students were asked to paraphrase paragraphs, there were **28%** giving answers. Among these answer, **40%** made mistake in *changing structure & grammar*, **22.5%** made mistake in *changing word*, **15%** made *patchwork plagiarism.* Another **22.5%** made the mistake of *summarizing,* rather than paraphrasing or lost or added information to the original paragraphs.

Through Graduation Papers of 15 graduates, there were **33.3%** succeeding with paraphrasing skills. The common mistakes were *word-for-word plagiarism* (**40%**), *patchwork* (**30%**)*, paraphrase plagiarism* (**20%**) *and stealing an apt term* (**20%**).In addition, there were some Graduation Papers in which the students made both mistakes: *paraphrase plagiarism* and *stealing an apt term; patchwork* and *word-for-word plagiarism.* These Graduation Papers took up **2%** of the unsuccessful ones.

5.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.3.1. Implications for the Learners

Firstly, on account of the paraphrasing methods and suggestions highlighted in this study *(2.2.6.2),* Vietnamese students may find it beneficial for academic writing.

Secondly, regular practice hones paraphrasing skills. This suggestion requires a great effort by students themselves. In other words, besides the tasks given by the teacher, students should practice on their own, for example, by doing Toelf Ibt exercises. In addition, students should utilise this skill where suitable, such as in writing essays and assignments and certainly, in their graduation paper.

Thirdly, students should be given pair-work or group-work exercises, so that they can peer-correct. Correcting each other's paraphrasing tasks involves reading the original text carefully to comprehend the whole content. Analyzing and correcting each other's mistakes has reciprocal benefits, and will help them remember those mistakes and avoid making them later.

If students want to successfully paraphrase, they should avoid plagiarism by following one of these three tips:

1) Take notes in your own words. A good strategy is: read, put away your books and think, and then write your notes.

2) Acknowledge quotations, even in your own notes. This will help you avoid accidental plagiarism when you copy from your own notes, not realising the words were copied from a textbook.

3) If you use the ideas of other people, be explicit about it. That is to say, cite the relevant author at the relevant point in your writing. It is then not possible for anyone to accuse you of cheating or stealing

someone else's work. It will also indicate that you know the background [50].

5.3.2. Implications for the Teachers

It is my hope, that this study offers useful suggestions on teaching paraphrasing skills by thorough explanation, demonstration of methods and suggestions for paraphrasing, especially at paragraph level and the setting of more practice exercises. In addition, it would be helpful if teachers gave their students more opportunities to practice in class in pairs or groups, under their supervision, and gave more practice exercises.

Also, teachers need to pay more attention to paraphrasing, because it is considered one of the fundamental techniques of academic writing. This skill will help their students greatly in writing essays and assignments, as well as their graduation paper in the final year.

The most difficult level which most of the students face is paraphrasing paragraphs. In order to solve this problem, we would like to introduce the theory with an example from two famous linguists that teachers can apply in teaching.

According to Alice Oshima, Ann Hogue [13], there are 4 steps to writing a good paraphrase:

STEP 1: Read the original passage several times until you understand it fully. Look up unfamiliar words, and find synonyms for them. If you need to take notes, write down only one or two words for each idea – not complete sentences.

STEP 2: Write your paraphrase from memory. Include as much of the information as you remember. Don't look at the original while you are writing.

STEP 3: Check your paraphrase against the original for accuracy and completeness. If necessary, add points you have missed.

STEP 4: Name the source of the original passage in parentheses at the end of your paraphrase.

In short, students and teachers need to work together to improve paraphrasing skills. With the intention and aim of helping Vietnamese students in general and fourth-year students at the Da Nang College of Foreign Languages in particular, in paraphrasing academic writing, we hope the above suggestions will be useful.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1) The number of students investigated is only a small proportion of the student population. It was unrealistic to ask all the students of the fourth – year to do the Questionnaire and Diagnostic Test in their free time during break; therefore, the scope of the study is limited.

2) A shortage of necessary materials and reference books. During the analysis and processing of the data from Graduation Papers, we had difficulty in finding the original passages which graduates had paraphrased to determine which mistakes they had made. It was not possible to collect all reference books for 15 Graduation Papers.

3) Concerning the work of processing data for the Questionnaire, Diagnostic Test and Graduation Papers, all figures were calculated manually, so there may be inaccuracies.

4) With all the above-mentioned circumstances and my own personal limitations, shortcomings are unavoidable in this thesis.

5.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1) Further investigation into paraphrasing experienced by Vietnamese students of English in Reading, Listening and Speaking subjects.

2) Further investigation into the paraphrasing relationship across the four skills of Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking, to devise methods to help Vietnamese learners of English improve this ability across the board.