

Challenges, Benefits, and Motivations in Paraphrasing: Insights from Marine and Fisheries EFL Students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Academic Writing; EFL Students; Marine and Fisheries Education; Paraphrasing Challenges; Vocabulary Development</p> <p>Received: 05 Aug 2024 Revised: 30 Sep 2024 Accepted: 21 Oct 2024</p>	<p>This study explores the challenges, motivations, and benefits of paraphrasing for Marine and Fisheries EFL students, aiming to uncover factors that impact their ability to rephrase academic texts. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through field notes and semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively sampled students. The findings reveal that students face significant challenges in paraphrasing due to limited vocabulary, difficulties in sentence restructuring, and low self-confidence. Some students perceive English proficiency as less relevant to their future careers, reducing motivation to enhance their language skills. However, regular paraphrasing practice was found to provide valuable benefits, including vocabulary expansion, improved understanding of sentence structures, and increased confidence in handling technical content. These outcomes underscore the potential of paraphrasing exercises to support academic skill-building and professional readiness in specialized fields. The study suggests the need for targeted pedagogical strategies that emphasize vocabulary development, structural flexibility, and confidence-building. These findings contribute to the understanding of paraphrasing in EFL contexts and offer practical recommendations for enhancing students' language skills in discipline-specific academic environments.</p>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Paraphrasing is an essential skill in academic writing, allowing students to synthesize, reframe, and present ideas from source texts in their own words. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, mastering paraphrasing is especially critical, as it enables students to avoid plagiarism and contributes to deeper comprehension of academic materials (Keck, 2006). For students in specialized fields like Marine and Fisheries studies, where scientific literature is frequently in English, the ability to effectively paraphrase is vital to accessing, understanding, and applying knowledge from global research (Tahang et al., 2021). However, despite its importance, paraphrasing poses significant challenges, particularly for non-native English speakers who often face language barriers and lack confidence in restructuring complex ideas without altering the intended meaning (Clarín et al., 2023).

Several studies highlight the complexities of paraphrasing within EFL contexts. For instance, Rinjani and Ovilia (2023) demonstrated that paraphrasing skills correlate strongly with vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, both of which are common obstacles for EFL students. Similarly, Pratama et al. (2022) found that students struggle with finding synonyms and restructuring sentences, often resulting in unintentional plagiarism due to lack of linguistic resources. Other studies, such as those by Trinh et al. (2022) and Hidayati (2022), point to the anxiety and lack of confidence



students feel when required to paraphrase complex academic texts, which can impact their performance. Moreover, in specialized domains like Marine and Fisheries, students face the added challenge of technical jargon, which requires both domain-specific vocabulary and a higher level of English proficiency to paraphrase effectively (Isma et al., 2023, 2024; Relia et al., 2021; Wahyuni & Cahya, 2024).

While extensive research has investigated paraphrasing challenges among general EFL learners, less attention has been paid to students in vocational or specialized fields, such as Marine Affairs and Fisheries, where technical language and content-specific knowledge may pose unique paraphrasing obstacles. Although previous studies have explored vocabulary, grammar, and self-confidence as influential factors (Ghafar, 2023; Hartono & Prima, 2021), there remains a need to understand how these factors impact students in field-specific contexts and how targeted strategies can be developed to support these learners. Furthermore, most existing research has focused on paraphrasing as a language skill rather than examining the motivations and perceived benefits students experience through paraphrasing practice, which can inform more effective pedagogical approaches.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring the challenges, motivations, and benefits associated with paraphrasing for Marine and Fisheries EFL students in Indonesia. Specifically, it investigates two primary areas: (1) the difficulties students encounter in paraphrasing, including linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors, and (2) the students' perspectives on how paraphrasing benefits their academic growth and professional readiness in their field. By focusing on students within a specialized academic discipline, this research sheds light on the particular needs and learning dynamics of EFL learners in vocational fields, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of paraphrasing challenges across different educational contexts.

The contributions of this study are twofold. First, it provides insights that could inform the design of paraphrasing instruction tailored to EFL learners in technical fields, helping educators develop strategies that address both general and discipline-specific language barriers. Second, by identifying the motivations and perceived benefits of paraphrasing among these students, the study underscores the role of paraphrasing in building language proficiency, academic integrity, and professional competence, which are essential skills for success in any field. Through these contributions, this research not only adds to the growing body of literature on EFL paraphrasing challenges but also offers practical recommendations for educators and curriculum designers aiming to support students in specialized fields.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate the challenges, motivations, and perceived benefits of paraphrasing among EFL students specializing in Marine and Fisheries studies. The methodology was selected to allow for an in-depth exploration of students' paraphrasing experiences and to capture the complexities of their linguistic and psychological challenges. The study was conducted at the Politeknik Ahli Usaha Perikanan in Indonesia, with a purposive sample of 15 students selected from a larger population of 59 students enrolled in the Teknologi Akuakultur (TAK) program for the 2023-2024 academic year. The participants, chosen through random purposive sampling, represent a diverse range of paraphrasing proficiency levels, allowing for varied perspectives on the paraphrasing process. This sample size was considered appropriate for qualitative analysis, ensuring that individual challenges and insights could be thoroughly examined.

Data were collected using two primary instruments: field notes and semi-structured interviews. Field notes were taken throughout eight instructional sessions in which students engaged in paraphrasing tasks. Each session required students to paraphrase a paragraph from an English text relevant to their field. During these sessions, the researcher observed and recorded classroom

dynamics, student interactions, and notable behaviors related to the paraphrasing task. This observational data provided contextual insights into the paraphrasing challenges faced by students in real time. The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each of the 15 participants at the end of the study period. Ten core questions guided the interviews, focusing on the students' paraphrasing difficulties, the underlying reasons for these difficulties, and their perceived benefits from the paraphrasing exercises. The questions were designed to be open-ended to encourage students to share their experiences in depth. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow students to express their thoughts freely, and responses were transcribed and translated into English for analysis.

The data analysis process involved categorizing students' responses and field notes based on emerging themes related to their paraphrasing challenges, motivations, and benefits. The responses were initially coded by grouping similar ideas, then further refined to identify patterns and unique insights within the data. For instance, common themes included vocabulary limitations, sentence restructuring challenges, anxiety, and self-confidence issues. Each theme was analyzed with a focus on how these factors influenced students' ability to paraphrase effectively and the specific needs for instructional support.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Challenges Faced by Marine and Fisheries EFL Students in Paraphrasing

Based on their responses, students reported challenges in understanding original texts, a lack of vocabulary, difficulties in sentence restructuring, and self-confidence issues. These difficulties were classified into two main groups: students who struggled to comprehend the source text and those who understood it but faced obstacles in rephrasing it accurately.

The first group of students expressed difficulty understanding the original text, primarily due to limited vocabulary and complex sentence structures in English. Below are some responses from participants in this group:

"I have a limited vocabulary, so it's hard for me to understand and paraphrase the text." (FN)

"I struggle to understand the initial meaning of the text and to use the right words to convey it." (SM)

"There are often terms and expressions that are challenging to understand, making paraphrasing very difficult." (CAA)

These responses highlight how vocabulary limitations prevent students from fully grasping the meaning of complex texts, which in turn hinders their ability to rephrase ideas in their own words. Respondents noted a reliance on specific words in the source text, demonstrating that insufficient vocabulary forces them to either copy directly or resort to overly simplistic phrasing, which does not capture the nuances of the original content.

The second group included students who understood the main ideas of the text but encountered difficulties in rephrasing sentences accurately while maintaining the original meaning. Some of their responses are as follows:

"I understand the text, but finding synonyms and changing the sentence structure without losing meaning is tough." (NL)

"Even if I understand the text, I don't have enough vocabulary or grammar knowledge to paraphrase it well." (TO)

"I can follow the general idea, but I get stuck when trying to restructure sentences differently." (VV)

These excerpts illustrate that even when students comprehend the text, they often lack the advanced vocabulary and grammar required to transform sentences accurately. For example, NL notes



the difficulty of selecting synonyms and restructuring sentences, while VV describes their struggle to move beyond the original wording. This suggests a gap between comprehension and productive language skills, where students' understanding of the text does not translate into the ability to express the same ideas independently.

A common challenge for both groups was low self-confidence and anxiety when paraphrasing. Several students expressed hesitation and doubt about changing sentence structures for fear of altering the intended meaning:

"I hesitate to change too much because I worry about changing the original meaning." (RBM)

"I feel anxious when paraphrasing because I'm afraid that I might misunderstand the text or lose its meaning." (NZ)

These responses indicate that self-confidence plays a crucial role in the paraphrasing process. A lack of confidence can lead students to stick too closely to the original structure or wording, resulting in paraphrases that may border on plagiarism or fail to exhibit independent interpretation.

The findings reveal that Marine and Fisheries EFL students face multiple challenges in paraphrasing, stemming from limited vocabulary, difficulties in sentence restructuring, and a lack of self-confidence. Students who struggle with text comprehension are hindered by insufficient vocabulary, while those who understand the text find it difficult to rephrase accurately. Low confidence further exacerbates these issues, causing students to doubt their paraphrasing abilities. These insights underscore the need for targeted instructional strategies that address vocabulary building, sentence structure, and confidence-building in paraphrasing skills.

3.2 The Rationale Behind Paraphrasing Difficulties

Several factors contribute to their struggles, including limited English proficiency, a lack of perceived relevance of English skills to their future careers, and various external factors like class environment and teaching methods.

Some students reported that they had not prioritized English language skills, viewing them as less relevant to their professional goals. This perception affected their motivation and commitment to improving language skills needed for paraphrasing:

"I didn't focus much on learning English because I didn't think it would be needed for my work, especially as a fisheries technician." (FN)

"I didn't feel the need to learn it deeply, as it doesn't seem crucial for my future job." (FMS)

These responses suggest that students' perceived lack of relevance in learning English influences their engagement and motivation to build essential language skills. For instance, FN's role as a technician led them to believe that English proficiency would not be a priority, ultimately impacting their dedication to vocabulary and grammar improvement. This mindset may create a barrier to developing paraphrasing abilities, as students may not invest the time required to build the necessary language foundation.

Another significant factor was students' lack of confidence, which often hindered their willingness to engage deeply in language tasks. Several students noted anxiety about using English and a lack of self-assurance in their skills:

"I feel nervous when I try to paraphrase because I'm unsure of my English skills." (RY)

"I don't feel confident in learning English, and that makes it harder to try paraphrasing." (SJV)



This lack of self-confidence, as expressed by RY, leads to heightened anxiety, especially when attempting to restructure complex sentences. SJV's hesitation to engage in paraphrasing reflects how low self-assurance can limit students' willingness to take risks and develop independence in language use. Without confidence, students may avoid actively practicing paraphrasing, which is essential for mastering the skill.

Environmental and instructional factors also played a role in students' challenges with paraphrasing. Some students felt that the classroom atmosphere and teaching methods affected their ability to learn effectively:

"The class is often too crowded and noisy, which makes it hard to concentrate on learning." (SM)

"There are too many students in each class, and the teaching method doesn't really support learning English." (CAA)

As noted by SM, the crowded and noisy classroom environment hindered concentration, making it challenging for students to absorb language concepts necessary for paraphrasing. CAA pointed out that large class sizes and teacher-centered instruction limited personalized support, which is often crucial for students struggling with complex tasks like paraphrasing. Such external factors suggest that a more supportive and interactive learning environment might alleviate some of the difficulties students face.

The findings reveal that the rationale behind paraphrasing difficulties among Marine and Fisheries EFL students is multifaceted, involving a combination of limited language proficiency, low motivation driven by perceived irrelevance of English to future careers, self-confidence issues, and challenging learning environments. Addressing these underlying factors through targeted pedagogical approaches could enhance students' paraphrasing skills by fostering motivation, building self-confidence, and providing a conducive learning environment tailored to their unique needs.

3.3 The Benefits of Paraphrasing for Marine and Fisheries EFL Students

Paraphrasing helped students build essential language skills, including vocabulary expansion, improved understanding of sentence structure, and enhanced familiarity with technical language. These benefits indicate that regular engagement with paraphrasing tasks holds considerable value, even for students who initially struggle.

Many students reported an improvement in their vocabulary, particularly with terms related to their field of study. This vocabulary expansion allowed them to better understand and express ideas within academic texts:

"My vocabulary has grown, especially with terms used in aquaculture and scientific writing." (FN)

"Paraphrasing has helped me learn new words, especially those common in aquaculture journals." (SJV)

"I now recognize more words related to my field, and it's easier to understand the material." (RY)

These responses illustrate how paraphrasing contributes to vocabulary development, particularly within specialized fields. FN noted the benefit of learning terminology used in aquaculture; a significant advantage given the technical nature of much of the academic material in their studies. SJV and RY echoed this, expressing how increased exposure to vocabulary through paraphrasing has improved their comprehension and ability to engage with field-specific texts.

In addition to vocabulary growth, students indicated that paraphrasing enhanced their grasp of sentence structure and grammar. This improvement helped them build stronger, more coherent sentences in English:



"I've started to understand how sentences are structured, and I feel more confident forming my own sentences." (NL)

"Paraphrasing has made me familiar with different sentence structures, which helps when writing in English." (SMS)

"Through paraphrasing, I've learned how to adjust sentence structures without changing the meaning." (NZ)

As noted by NL, understanding sentence structure was an important outcome of practicing paraphrasing, which gradually increased their confidence in writing independently. SMS and NZ emphasized that exposure to various sentence forms enabled them to approach writing tasks with greater flexibility and accuracy. This improvement in structural understanding is crucial for academic writing, where clarity and coherence are essential.

Finally, students expressed that paraphrasing had practical benefits beyond vocabulary and grammar, as it allowed them to build familiarity with the content of their field and reduced anxiety in academic writing:

"I feel less nervous now when I write, because I know how to paraphrase ideas correctly." (VV)

"It's easier to write assignments now because I'm more used to the language in our field." (TO)

"Paraphrasing makes me feel more prepared to read and write about topics in aquaculture." (CTS)

These statements highlight how regular paraphrasing practice builds students' confidence, helping them feel more comfortable with academic writing tasks. VV described paraphrasing as a tool for reducing anxiety, while TO and CTS noted how it allowed them to approach assignments more confidently. This indicates that paraphrasing does not only enhance language skills but also serves as a confidence-building exercise that prepares students for future academic and professional demands.

The findings show that paraphrasing provides significant benefits to Marine and Fisheries EFL students by expanding their vocabulary, improving sentence structure knowledge, and building familiarity with field-specific content. These improvements contribute to students' overall language proficiency and reduce their anxiety about academic writing. Consequently, these findings suggest that paraphrasing exercises, though challenging, can play a valuable role in preparing students for academic success and professional communication within their specialized fields.

4. DISCUSSION

This study explored the challenges, motivations, and benefits of paraphrasing among Marine and Fisheries EFL students, uncovering specific difficulties and the valuable gains students experience through paraphrasing. The findings shed light on the linguistic and psychological barriers that hinder paraphrasing proficiency, as well as the significant role paraphrasing plays in supporting vocabulary acquisition, confidence, and academic skills in a specialized field.

The main challenges identified included limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with sentence structures, and low self-confidence. Students either struggled to understand complex academic texts or, even when they understood the material, found it difficult to transform ideas into their own words. These challenges align with findings from previous studies. Rinjani and Ovilia (2023), for example, highlighted vocabulary knowledge as a crucial factor in paraphrasing, noting that EFL students often lack the lexical resources necessary to rephrase accurately. Additionally, Pratama et al. (2022) found that difficulties in sentence restructuring often lead students to copy directly from source texts, which increases the risk of plagiarism. The current study supports these findings but also highlights the added challenges faced by students in specialized fields like Marine and Fisheries, where technical vocabulary is essential but difficult to acquire without targeted support. The benefits of paraphrasing observed in this study were



notable, as students reported improvements in vocabulary, sentence structure understanding, and confidence in handling academic material. These benefits mirror findings by Trinh et al. (2022), who demonstrated that paraphrasing helps EFL students develop academic writing skills through vocabulary expansion and improved sentence flexibility. Additionally, Wahyuni and Cahya (2024) found that paraphrasing exercises enhance students' reading comprehension and self-efficacy, a conclusion echoed in this study, where students became more comfortable with reading and paraphrasing scientific texts over time. This suggests that paraphrasing, while challenging, is an effective tool for academic skill-building and content mastery, especially in fields where English proficiency is essential for professional development.

The implications of this study suggest that paraphrasing should be incorporated as a regular practice in EFL programs for students in specialized fields. Given the vocabulary and structural challenges identified, educators may consider introducing paraphrasing exercises that focus specifically on vocabulary building, sentence restructuring, and discipline-specific terminology. Providing a supportive learning environment with ample feedback could also help alleviate students' self-confidence issues, as many respondents noted that anxiety impeded their paraphrasing performance. Despite its valuable insights, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small and drawn from a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study's qualitative design, while providing depth, may not capture the full range of paraphrasing challenges faced by a broader population of EFL students. Future research could build on these findings by using a larger and more diverse sample and employing quantitative measures to assess specific improvements in paraphrasing skills over time. This study contributes to the understanding of paraphrasing in EFL contexts, particularly for students in specialized academic disciplines. By addressing the unique linguistic needs of Marine and Fisheries students, this research underscores the importance of targeted instructional strategies that can support vocabulary growth, structural knowledge, and confidence in paraphrasing, ultimately enhancing students' academic and professional success.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges, motivations, and benefits of paraphrasing for Marine and Fisheries EFL students, providing insights into the specific linguistic and psychological factors that influence their ability to rephrase academic texts. The findings reveal that students encounter significant difficulties in paraphrasing due to limited vocabulary, challenges with sentence restructuring, and a lack of self-confidence. These obstacles prevent them from effectively engaging with academic material and mastering the paraphrasing skills necessary for avoiding plagiarism. Additionally, the study identifies that some students perceive English skills as less relevant to their future careers, which reduces their motivation to improve language proficiency. Despite these challenges, paraphrasing also yields valuable benefits for students. Regular practice helps them expand their vocabulary, become familiar with diverse sentence structures, and build confidence in their ability to understand and communicate complex ideas. These gains are especially crucial for students in specialized fields, where technical vocabulary and professional language skills play an essential role in academic and career success. The implications of this research underscore the need for targeted support in EFL education, particularly for students in specialized disciplines. Educators should consider implementing paraphrasing exercises that emphasize vocabulary building and sentence flexibility, while also creating a supportive learning environment that reduces anxiety and builds confidence. This approach can prepare students to meet the demands of academic writing and professional communication in their chosen fields. In conclusion, paraphrasing is a skill that, while challenging, provides critical language and cognitive benefits for EFL students. Further research with larger samples and varied methodologies is recommended to explore



how tailored instructional strategies can improve paraphrasing skills across diverse educational and disciplinary contexts.

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