

Undergraduates' Ability in Writing Paraphrase and Their Perceptions of Plagiarism

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Abstract

Writing in academic settings is one of the requirements that higher education students have to master. The academic writings may be in the forms of essays, journal articles, paper, and thesis. The thesis is the final project that they have to complete demonstrating their ability in incorporating language skills and components. The competence in presenting language skills and components is one of the main requirements that the graduates of English Language Education Program (ELEP) have to fulfill. One particular skill in writing the thesis is the use of paraphrase when citing sources. Unacceptable paraphrase may result in plagiarism. This phenomenon is quite prevalent especially to universities that have not yet regulated the penalty for plagiarism. This study aims to investigate whether the theses written by the undergraduate of ELEP in Universitas Negeri Padang contain acceptable paraphrases, and to seek out their perceptions of plagiarism.

Keywords: *academic writing, paraphrase, plagiarism*

Introduction

Preparing and graduating prospective English teachers who have excellent English proficiency is a learning achievement targeted by English Education study programs from an institute of teacher education (LPTK) including English Language Education Study Program (PS PBI), FBS, Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). This learning achievement was also written in the vision of the English Language and literature where PS PBI is included: "To prepare and graduate professional English teachers in Indonesia. Along with UNP's vision (2016), PS PBI graduate must become qualified graduates and be able to compete with teachers from universities in the Southeast Asia region by 2020. In other words, PS PBI graduates must be able to compete with the graduates in the same field from universities in Southeast Asia.

English language skills that must be mastered by PS PBI graduates include both aspects of language skills, receptive (ability to listen and read) and productive skills (ability to speak and write). These two aspects of language skills are interrelated and inseparable. For example, the accuracy of pronunciation is one aspect of speaking skills that can be influenced by the frequency of learners in listening to dialogues spoken by English native speakers, and the ability to write is strongly influenced by the frequency of reading and the quality of their reading materials. However, the demand for listening, speaking and reading skills is not as same as the demand for writing skills. In writing skills, students are required to produce academic writing, such as essays, journal articles, proposals and thesis.

A marker of academic writing is the existence of scientific elements. In academic writing, "an author issues ideas and opinions that are reinforced by facts, statistics, quotes and various other types of information taken from various sources" (Oshima, 2006, p. 39). Strengthening ideas from sources outside of the author's writing is called citing, which can be done in two ways: direct quotation and indirect quotation. According to Oshima (2006), direct quotation is to quote expert opinions exactly as they are written without making any changes to the language and ideas. Meanwhile, indirect quotation is to quote expert's opinion using the author's own language but not to change the idea or opinion of the expert. This can be done by paraphrasing and summarizing.

Many students are not capable to produce acceptable paraphrase. Khairunnisa, Sutapa, and Surmiyati (2014) found that 80% of the students have not achieved the criteria of an acceptable paraphrasing, many of them only change the word and sentence structure of the expert idea rather than restating the ideas. Moreover, 60 % of them preferred to use direct quotation rather than paraphrasing in their research design. On the interview, they found that 20% of them preferred to use direct quotation rather than paraphrasing, the students get some difficulties to understand the expert idea to be restated. While in direct quotation, the students just copied the expert's theory or words without understanding the ideas. It shows us that the students ability in paraphrasing is an issue in our education today.

Dung (2010) in his work “An Investigation in Paraphrasing Experienced by Vietnamese Students of English in Academic Writing”. He identified 77,5 % of fourth years students at the college of Foreign Language – University of Da Nang made mistakes in paraphrasing, where 40% made mistake in changing structure and grammar, 22,5 % in changing word and 15% fall into plagiarism.

Based on the background, there are some aspects that we can point out. The students’ tend to change the wording but keep the original structure of ideas and sentence structure, The student’s use direct quotation rather than paraphrasing in their research design , some students try to paraphrase at the sentence level rather than the ideas level, made mistakes on changing structure and grammar, working in a second language, and dealing with plagiarism practice.

Results and Discussion

Concept of Writing

Writing is a skill that is a communicate process by using several ways to do. The writer should develop and organize the ideas and delivering information to the readers in written form. Through writing, the writer delivers their ideas from texts, articles or the information that they listen to. According to O’Malley and Lorraine (1995:136) writing is a personal act in which writer take ideas and change them into written form. It means, the writers deliver their ideas to the reader through paper.

In writing activities, the writer should have some knowledge of the components of writing.the learner will get some difficulty to express their idea and share the information well to the readers if the learner have less knowledge about the components of writing (Saadiyah, 2009:23).

In conclusion writing is a language skill which needs a process in order to create a good composition. The students should select the topic, analyze the topic and express their ideas in the written form. The process helps the students to creating their ideas easily.

Academic Writing

Academic writing is a kind of writing in academic field. According to Yakhontova (2003) Academic writing is a type of writing that is used for academic purposes. The out-put of academic writing are paper, thesis, dissertation, and journal article.

De Poel & Gasiorek (2012) categorizes academic writing as a prominent component of academic discourse which may take a number of different forms, including essays, projects, lecture notes, and theses. Academic writing has specific standards and refers to certain writing formats. Writing an academic text is not a simple matter, especially for L2 students. Many L2 students find it hard to write their academic writing into a proper form (Hussen, 2015). Hussen stated that more problems occur because of their lack of familiarity with the conventions and expectations of academic writing in English medium universities.

According to Yakhontova (2003) explains the process of academic writing, there are some requirements that students should fulfil. In academic writing, the students refer to theories and use logical thinking to come up with theoretical truth. The theories provide the basis of what is believed to be the truth from the previous studies. It is then proven by providing facts from the data gathered and relating them with theories. Paragraphs are useful to deliver theories and findings to be discussed to achieve scientific truth.

Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is defined as restating a sentence in such a way that both sentences would generally be recognized as lexically and syntactically different while remaining semantically equal (Amoroso, 2007). This definition implies at least two echoes: reading comprehension and writing skill. Therefore, as indicated by McCarthy, Guess, and McNamara (2009), paraphrasing has also been used to aid comprehension, stimulate prior knowledge, and assist writing skill development.

There are several criteria to be comprehended by students as outlined by Oshima (2006, p.129). First, use your own words and your own sentence structure. It means that the students should write their own word but it has same ideas to the original source. Second, the paraphrase has same length to the original. Next, has same meaning to the original.

The Concept of Perceptions

The students’ perceptions play a crucial in educational perspectives. According to Devito (1997:75), perception is the process when we become aware of many stimuli that affect our sense. Similarly, Sobur (2009:446) proposes that perception is a part of the overall process that produces the response after the stimulus is applied to humans. In conclusion, perception is an ability of the overall process of stimuli to make a response and we become aware of something after seeing and understanding something.

The Concept of Plagiarism

“Plagiarism as one of academic misconducts is one of the most controversial issue in higher education and it is increasingly widespread among students” (Bahadori, Izadi & Hoseinpoufard, 2012). Grossberg (2011) collects several central tenets definition of plagiarism defined by American Historical Association. First, and most basically, plagiarism is defined as using the exact wording of another author without appropriate attribution. Second, using another person's concepts, theories, rhetorical strategies, and interpretations without proper attribution. Third, plagiarism happens when the writer fails to acknowledge the work of other. Fourth, recognizing the appropriation of another's words or ideas without proper attribution constituted an ethical and professional but not a legal infraction unless it drives into copyright violation.

Ehrich and Walton (2014) add plagiarism appears when someones missappropriating others' ideas, paraphrasing without stating acknowledgement, 'cut and paste' plagiarism (importing unquoted, unattributed, and completely word-for-word excerpts from another source into an academic assessment), or misappropriating entire works (submitting work completed entirely by another, such as ghost-written essays).

According to Bailey (2011) there are some reasons to avoid plagiarism practice: the students will not get their understanding by copying the word of others, there are some rules in academic community, the teacher could check the students word by using some application on the computer and it will easily detected, it will cause some punishment such as failing a course or leaving the college.

Conclusions

The previous sections of this paper have explained us about undergraduates' ability in paraphrasing and their perceptions of plagiarism. There have been many descriptions and explanations about them. The undergraduate ability in paraphrasing and their perceptions of plagiarism are interconnected each other. The undergraduates' who do paraphrase will avoid plagiarism practice, and the undergraduates' who do not do paraphrase will turn into plagiarism.

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