



## **The Effect of Paraphrasing Instruction on Korean EFL Learners’ Attempts of Paraphrasing**

**Soojin Ahn**

*Incheon National University, South Korea*

### **Introduction**

Paraphrasing is a challenging but important skill in academic writing. Paraphrasing is usually related to summarizing because it is to read a text and rewrites the key ideas into a shorter version of the text (Abdul-Ameer, 2020). Research has shown that L2 writers struggle with appropriate source use and are unaware of plagiarism because they may never have been taught about paraphrasing strategies (Pecorari, 2003). They do not know that text borrowing without citation constitutes plagiarism or to avoid it, they should paraphrase a source text into their own words. Given the fact that plagiarism has not received much attention in EFL contexts and its seriousness in higher education, explicit instruction of paraphrasing skills for L2 students should remain a high priority. Therefore, writing instructors should give students a chance to learn appropriate source use by paraphrasing.

Meanwhile, previous studies reported that the effects of given instructions are different depending on individual differences. Among them, it is said that learners’ motivation is the most important factor to affect the effectiveness and feasibility of certain instruction (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). That is, if a learner is highly motivated to learn a language skill, the instruction may have positive impacts on his or her L2 development. Thus, it needs to investigate the links between students’ motivation and the effect of paraphrasing instruction in the L2 classroom.

However, little has been investigated thus far as to the effectiveness of paraphrasing instruction on Korean EFL students, with students’ motivation levels as the variable of interest. To address this problem, this study is to examine if paraphrasing instruction has positive impacts on Korean EFL students’ awareness of appropriate source borrowing, and if the efficacy of the instruction is related to students’ motivational level. The following research questions are thus addressed:

1. Does paraphrasing instruction have any positive impacts on Korean EFL students’ awareness of appropriate source borrowing?
2. Is the effectiveness and feasibility of paraphrase instruction influenced by students’ motivation level? Does motivation level have any positive influence on effectiveness and feasibility of paraphrasing instruction?



## Literature Review

### Factors Influencing Paraphrasing Performance

Shi (2004) examined how Chinese ESL students and L1 differ in using strategies of paraphrase when summarizing. The results indicate that most Chinese students plagiarized without citing the sources while the L1 student cited a reference even though they rewrite the ideas in their own words. Similarly, Keck (2006) compared paraphrasing strategies that L1 and L2 writers use in their summaries in terms of “near copy” and “minimal, moderate, and substantial revision.” It was found that L2 writers almost resort to the near copy and L1 writers made more moderate and substantial revisions. In a Korean EFL setting, Ji (2012) investigated if Korean L2 writers with a different level of English proficiency use different types of paraphrasing. The results show that although students with higher English proficiency showed more syntax changes, overall, Korean students relied entirely on minimal modifications like adding, subtracting, and replacing words regardless of their English proficiency.

Ahn (2020) examined whether the English proficiency of Korean EFL university students played an important role in copying a source without a reference. The results showed that the frequency of copying a source without citation was almost twice in a summary of students with lower English proficiency and they borrowed longer strings of words from a source than the more-proficient students. The students’ English proficiency also influenced their perceptions of plagiarism. The students with lower English proficiency were less aware that plagiarism could be a problem in higher education.

Besides the factors such as culture and language proficiency, research has also shown that inappropriate source use was caused by a lack of citation practice (Shi, 2004). Pecorari (2003) claims that L2 students are unaware of plagiarism because of little exposure to citation practices and do not intentionally hide the source. He maintains that learning the way to appropriately cite the source takes time and students should be explicitly instructed about the skills. Hagaman et al. (2016) proved that when middle school students who were fluent readers but had a little comprehension problem were taught paraphrasing strategies, they showed the development of reading comprehension. Text recall and short-answer questions were used to measure reading comprehension.

Choy and Lee (2012) examined the effects of teaching paraphrasing skills through how Malaysian university students’ perceptions of learning change after the instruction. The learners were trained to substitute words and phrases and avoid copying the original sentences from the source text. The results demonstrated that the learners partially benefited from the instruction: 36% of students perceived that the paraphrasing skills taught were helpful, but all students perceived that substituting words for those having the same meaning was challenging because of their limited vocabulary. All the students perceived that they needed more practice to enhance their paraphrasing skills. Finally, in McDonough et al. (2014) study, Thai EFL university students were explicitly taught how to refer to a source text and avoid verbatim copying of the source. The results showed that there has been a noticeable decrease in their use of copied word strings and an increase in the number of explicit reference and modified word strings. However, there has been little research that examined the effectiveness of paraphrasing instruction on Korean EFL students’ change in the use of paraphrase and their motivation playing an important role in the process.

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants in the present study are Korean university students enrolling in the required English course in the spring semester of 2020 taught by the researcher. The course that focuses on the development of students’ English reading and writing skills is taught for 100 minutes a week during a 15-week semester. All 39 students were freshmen. They were from various majors, had never lived in

English-speaking countries, and had not received prior instruction on the use of paraphrasing. They were assigned to two groups based on a survey questionnaire: 18 in the high-level motivation group and 21 in the low-level motivation group, respectively. To check group homogeneity, several summaries from each group were randomly selected and scored by a native English teacher. Homogeneity of variance was tested using one-way ANOVA and Levene statistics showed that both groups have equal variance ( $F = .329; p = .577$ ).

## Data Collection and Procedure

A pre-post design was conducted to see whether paraphrasing instruction has any positive impacts on Korean EFL students' awareness of appropriate source borrowing. The participants read the assigned readings from the college-level English textbook (Blass & Vargo, 2018) and wrote the summaries twice before and after the intervention as homework with a length of about 200 words. A total of 78 summaries were produced by the thirty-nine participants. Each class was held for 100 minutes per week and during each class, an average of 50 minutes was devoted to the paraphrasing instruction. The students were taught how to rephrase a text by using lexical, morphological, or syntactic changes during three weeks of instruction. While engaging in certain lessons, the students were given a handout with examples of different types of paraphrases. The researcher, then, let them practice the skills: starting with synonym changes, then derivational and inflectional, followed by changing the sentence structure. The intervention was followed by the second summary writing and a questionnaire.

To see if students' motivation facilitates the effectiveness of paraphrase instruction, the participants' motivation level in learning English was assessed at the beginning of the course by using a questionnaire. The motivation questionnaire deals with students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning English. Twenty items of motivational statements in a 5-point Likert scale were adapted from Nasihah and Cahyono's (2017) study. To check the appropriateness of the questionnaire items, the pilot questionnaire was given to a selected group of participants and refined based on the feedback. The questionnaire was provided both in English and in Korean with oral instructions from the researcher. To get an average score the researcher added up all the scores and divided them by the number of participants. The average score was 74.33. The above-average was classified into G1, the high-level motivation group ( $N = 18$ ), while the below-average into G2, the low-level motivation group ( $N = 21$ ).

## Analysis and Scoring

The summaries produced by the students were assessed by the researcher and the other rater who is a Korean English teacher and majors in English education. To identify any changes made during a paraphrase in summary writings before and after instruction sessions, this study used the classification system in Mori's (2019) study, which categorizes paraphrases according to morphological, lexical, and syntactic changes shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
*Paraphrases Showing Linguistic Changes*

Morphological	<i>verb to adjective</i> the behavior is repeated → a repeating behavior <i>adjective to noun</i> mildly aggressive behavior → mild aggression <i>adjective to adverb</i> law so ineffective with regard to → law cannot effectively deal with <i>noun to verb</i> increasing student reporting of bullying → encourage students to report any bullying <i>modal</i> could have negative implications → can create detrimental effects
Lexical	<i>synonym</i> patently unfair → seemingly unfair <i>synthetic to analytic</i> the school principal's commitment → the commitment of the school principals <i>addition</i> by their early 20s → by the time they reach their early 20s <i>subtraction</i> dozens of decisions every day → dozens per day
Syntactic	<i>active to passive</i> physical bullying includes → physical bullying is defined as <i>embedding adverb clause</i> It seems patently unfair to hold a teacher liable → as it would be seemingly unfair to punish teachers <i>clause reordering</i> Other bystanders frequently join in the bullying and begin to view the victims as somehow deserving of the treatment. The bullies themselves have a remarkably high probability of a criminal conviction by the time they reach their early 20s. → Researches show that a high percentage of bullies turn into criminals by their early 20s, and bystanders may feel the same vulnerability and share the same effect on the victims (Weddle, 2003).

All the changes were counted and converted to a percentage by dividing the number of changes by the total number of words in their summaries. To measure interrater reliability, the individual scores for the typology were selected randomly and compared, which showed a strong agreement between the two raters (Cohen's kappa = 0.82). To supplement the quantitative data, a questionnaire - two open-ended questions - was also used asking "How did you feel about the paraphrase lesson?" "Was it helpful to you to write in English? Why?" SPSS version 16 was used to compute the data and an independent sample t-test with an alpha set at .05 was conducted to examine how paraphrasing instruction affects Korean EFL university students with different levels of motivation.

## Results

To answer the first research question, this study investigated if there is a significant difference between students' use of paraphrasing before and after the instruction. A statistical analysis of the data revealed the paraphrase types used by the EFL students before intervention as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
*Total Amount of Linguistic Changes by Group Before Intervention*

Category	G1(N = 18)		G2(N = 21)		t-test	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Lexical	3.25	.48	4.83	.18	-6.854	.001*
Morphological	3.66	.19	2.0	.31	10.178	.000*
Syntactic	1.75	.33	1.80	.37	-.180	.862

Note. \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; G1=High level motivation group; G2=Low level motivation group

Table 2 shows the mean score of the linguistic changes students tried to paraphrase before the intervention of G1 and G2. The summaries written by G2 contained more lexical ( $M = 4.83$ ;  $M = 3.25$ ) and syntactic changes ( $M = 1.80$ ;  $M = 1.75$ ) than those written by G1 that contained more morphological changes ( $M = 3.66$ ;  $M = 2.0$ ). Statistically significant differences in the mean scores between the groups were observed in the lexical ( $t = -6.854$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) and morphological changes ( $t = 10.178$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the mean score of the syntactic changes. The following examples compare passages from summaries of G1 and G2 written before the

intervention in terms of linguistic changes.

Lexical changes

(1) Original: **The dams we've built on most of the world's major rivers** are **holding back** sediment that would otherwise be washed to sea (Blass & Vargo, 2018).

Example from G1

**The dams on rivers** are **disrupting** the natural sedimentation process.

(2) Original: The human **impact** on the **world** has become a lot obvious.

Example from G2

Human **effects** to **earth** are found nowadays.

For lexical changes, as seen in Example 1, the long strings of words such as “The dams we’ve built on most of the world’s major rivers” in the original text were successfully subtracted to “The dams on rivers” in the summary. Also, other words were paraphrased using synonyms (e.g., *holding back* to *disrupting*; *impact* to *effects*; and *world* to *earth*).

Morphological changes

(3) Original: It is a heady experience to see an idealistic map of Asia’s tiger landscapes linked by these not-yet-existence corridors. A **spider web** of green lines weaves among core tiger populations.

Example from G1

Asia’s tiger landscape maps are intertwined with green lines **like a spider's web** among core tiger groups.

(4) Original: The **human impact** on the world has become a lot more obvious since Stoppani’s day, in part because the size of the population has roughly quadrupled.

Example from G2

As the population has roughly quadrupled, today people experience more **people's impact** on the world than the 1870s.

For morphological changes, as seen in Examples 3 & 4, the noun phrases “spider web” and “human impact” were paraphrased to the possessive form “like a spider's web” and “people's impact.”

Syntactic changes

(5) Original: The Anthropocene **struck a chord**.

Example from G1

This word **is taken for granted**.

(6) Original: The human impact on the world has become a lot obvious **because** the size of the population has roughly quadrupled.

Example from G2

The size of the population has quadrupled, **so** human impact has made a big difference.

For syntactic changes, Example 5 shows the change in voice from active “struck a chord” to passive “is taken for granted” and Example 6 includes paraphrasing from subordinating conjunctions “because S+V”

to coordination “so.” Table 3 below shows the mean scores of the linguistic changes of both groups after the intervention.

TABLE 3  
Total Amount of linguistic changes by Group after intervention

Category	G1(N=18)		G2(N=21)		t-test	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Lexical	8.75	.25	7.16	.46	6.836	.000*
Morphological	3.0	.21	2.16	.15	7.203	.000*
Syntactic	2.75	.19	2.50	.39	1.323	.235

Note. \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; G1=High level motivation group; G2=Low level motivation group

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the linguistic changes students tried to paraphrase after the intervention of G1 and G2. After the intervention, both groups showed improvement in the mean scores except for the morphological change. Before the intervention, the mean score in the morphological change of G1 was 3.66 but that score decreased to 3.0 after the intervention. After the intervention, G1 showed better mean scores in all the linguistic changes than G2: lexical change ( $M = 8.75$ ;  $M = 7.16$ ), morphological change ( $M = 3.00$ ;  $M = 2.16$ ), and syntactic change ( $M = 2.75$ ;  $M = 2.50$ ). Before the intervention, G2 showed a better mean score in the lexical and syntactic changes than G1. The t-test indicated that there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores in the lexical ( $t = 6.836$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) and morphological changes ( $t = 7.203$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) between the groups. As shown in Table 2, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the mean score of the syntactic changes. The following examples compare passages from summaries of G1 and G2 written after the intervention in terms of linguistic changes.

#### Lexical changes

(7) Original: People lie to **boost** their **image**.

#### Example from G1

People lie to **make** themselves **stand out**.

(8) Original: Of mainland Africa’s ten **richest** countries eight lie partly or **entirely** within its temperate zones.

#### Example from G2

Of mainland Africa’s ten **affluent** countries eight lie partly or **completely** within its temperate zones.

For lexical changes, as seen in Examples 7 &8, the words in the original text were paraphrased using synonyms (e.g., *boost image* to *make someone stand out*; *richest* to *affluent*; *entirely* to *completely*).

#### Morphological changes

(9) Original: Many human illnesses **arose** when microbes **causing** disease in animals crossed species lines to **evolve** into a human disease.

#### Example from G1

Microbes which **cause** disease in animals **have arisen** a human disease by **evolution**.

(10) Original: Many areas of Africa have an **abundance** of resources.

#### Example from G2

Africa continents’ resources are **abundant**.

For morphological changes, as seen in Examples 9 &10, the past simple tense “arose” was paraphrased to the present complete tense “have arisen,” the present participle “causing” to the present simple tense

“cause,” the present simple tense “evolve” to the noun form “evolution,” and noun “abundance” to adjective “abundant.”

Syntactic changes

(11) Original: Researchers *speculate* that lying *arose* not long after the emergence of language.

Example from G1

It *is assumed* that lies *were caused* not long after the emergence of language.

(12) Original: The forces of erosion tend to win out over those of sedimentation.

Example from G2

Erosion occurs first *before sedimentation occurs*.

For syntactic changes, Example 11 shows the changes in voice from active “speculate” “arose” to passive “is assumed” “were caused” and Example 12 includes paraphrasing from a simple sentence to a complex sentence with subordinating conjunctions “because S+V.”

In response to the second research question, Table 4 below displays if there is a statistically significant difference at ( $p \leq .05$ ) in the mean scores of the linguistic changes according to the different levels of motivation before and after the intervention.

TABLE 4

*Differences in Before-After Intervention for Linguistic Changes by Groups*

	Lexical change		Morphological change		Syntactic change	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
G1(N = 18)	3.25	8.75	3.66	3.0	1.75	2.75
<i>t(p)</i>	-22.643 (.000)*		5.123 (.001)*		-5.852 (.001)*	
G2(N = 21)	4.83	7.16	2.0	2.16	1.8	2.5
<i>t(p)</i>	-10.655 (.000)*		-1.042 (.339)		-2.882 (.021)*	

Note. \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; G1=High level motivation group; G2=Low level motivation group

These results suggest that compared to their G2 counterparts, the G1 participants showed a more significant instruction effect. G1 showed improvement in the mean scores in the lexical change ( $M = 3.25$ ;  $M = 8.75$ ) and syntactic change ( $M = 1.75$ ;  $M = 2.75$ ) after the intervention, and the difference is statistically significant: lexical change ( $t = -22.643$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) and syntactic change ( $t = -5.852$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). In other words, G1 successfully paraphrased the sources using lexical and syntactic changes after the intervention. However, the instruction failed to encourage G1 to use more morphological changes in their summaries after the instruction. G2 also appears to successfully paraphrase the sources in their summaries using lexical ( $M = 4.83$ ;  $M = 7.16$ ) and syntactic changes ( $M = 1.8$ ;  $M = 2.5$ ) after the instruction. For G2, the effect of instruction was also statistically significant in lexical change ( $t = -10.655$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) and syntactic change ( $t = -2.882$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) but the differences were greater in G1. The mean score in the morphological changes of G2 also increased from 2.0 to 2.16 after the instruction although the difference was not statistically significant. It seems that morphological paraphrases are still challenging for both groups.

To supplement the results, this study used a questionnaire, which contained two open-ended questions. Regardless of their different level of motivation, almost all students responded that the instruction was helpful for them. A summary of open-ended questions is given in Table 5 below. The Korean responses were translated into English.

TABLE 5  
Summary of Student Responses (Open-Ended Questions)

How did you feel about the paraphrase lesson?
① Yes, it was helpful to write the sentence structure.
② Paraphrase lesson was really fun! I think it helped me a lot.
③ It was helpful to practice paraphrase.
④ First of all, I didn't have a lot of vocabulary, but I think I get to have a rich vocabulary.
⑤ It was good to know significant paraphrasing strategies I didn't know.
⑥ It was interesting because I didn't know it before the intervention.
⑦ Trying to change the expression into my own words helped me improve my vocabulary.
⑧ It was difficult to paraphrase by using morphological changes but it helped a lot when summarizing.
Was it helpful for English writing?
① As I continued to write, I became good at English writing.
② As I tried to paraphrase, I learned more words.
③ Yes, it was good to make a sentence. I think I need to write what I think in English.
④ It was good that I had time to write English, which I didn't usually do.
⑤ I wasn't used to writing in English, but it is okay now.
⑥ It helped. I think my writing ability has improved by thinking about how to write English sentences.
⑦ Because I usually don't have many opportunities to practice writing in English, I was able to improve my English writing skills through these lessons.
⑧ It was good to get feedback about English writing.

As seen in Table 5, many students expressed that the paraphrasing instruction improved their vocabulary skills. This is consistent with the quantitative results that all the groups showed a statistically significant difference in the mean score in lexical changes after the intervention. Students showed interest in learning such paraphrasing skills because they would be directly applying them when summarizing. It is also suggested that paraphrasing tasks could also be used as valid writing tasks for boosting students' motivation.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to investigate if the instruction of paraphrasing skills has positive impacts on Korean EFL students' awareness of appropriate source borrowing, and the efficacy of the intervention is related to the students' motivational level. The findings suggest that the participants successfully paraphrased the sources using lexical and syntactic changes after the paraphrasing instruction and that the benefits were especially more evident for the high-level motivation group. Although the low-level motivation group also successfully paraphrased the sources after the instruction, the *p* value is far larger in the high-level motivation group. However, the results showed no statistically significant differences in the mean scores for the morphological change before and after the instruction for both groups. Inexplicably, less morphological changes occurred in the high-level motivation group after the instruction. It seems that the participants benefited less from the intervention on the morphological changes. The likely explanation is that the morphological changes require students to have more complex linguistic knowledge such as derivational and inflectional changes. It may be much clearer to the students to simply paraphrase certain words with synonyms or change voice from active to passive and vice versa.

This implies that Korean EFL university students need to be more engaged in morphological changes when paraphrasing. The paraphrasing skills could be taught in conjunction with grammar lessons to use grammatical knowledge in writing: syntactic structure (simple, compound, complex sentences with subordinating conjunctions), inflectional morphology (tense, number), and derivational morphology (parts of speech). This does not mean that certain linguistic changes may be more valued than others. Depending on the course syllabus and the proficiency level of the students, certain paraphrasing skills



could be more recommended: for less proficient L2 learners, the writing instructor can encourage them to paraphrase by using lexical and syntactic changes.

Finally, this study was conducted on a small scale for Korean EFL university students. Therefore, future research should explore whether the results can be verified with larger and different student groups with various individual differences such as different levels of English proficiency, working memory capacity, and cognitive and affective domains. Also, the paraphrasing instruction in this study had lasted for a short period of time, so future research might examine if students' paraphrasing skills can develop more over a longer training period. Also, it would be more valuable to investigate the impact of paraphrasing instruction in a more detailed analysis for linguistic changes in a paraphrase. Last, while it is beyond the scope of this study when teaching paraphrasing, writing instructors need to consider if there is any semantic change in a paraphrase. In this study, for example, the sentence from the source – “the forces of erosion tend to win out over those of sedimentation” – was paraphrased into “erosion occurs first before sedimentation.” Indeed, the students are changing the original meaning when paraphrasing.

Notwithstanding this limitation, this study may suggest pedagogical implications: the writing instructors may use this framework – a combination of lexical, morphological, and syntactic changes - as clear guidelines defining (un)acceptable source use, not just teaching students to paraphrase a text in their own words. Writing instructors should test if this framework as a method to explicitly instruct paraphrasing skills is appropriate in their particular settings, and how students respond to it. Paraphrasing is difficult to master, and it is hoped that this study can provide scaffolding to help Korean EFL university students to be competent academic writers.

### The Author

*Soojin Ahn* is visiting professor in the Dept. of Liberal Art Institute of Incheon National University in Incheon, Korea. Her research interests are in English writing and speaking and corpus.

Department of Liberal Art Institute  
Incheon National University  
Incheon, 22012, Korea  
Tel: +82 328358172  
Mobile: + 82 107164-6970  
Email: sjahn@inu.ac.kr

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