

Paraphrasing Techniques for Improving Students' Speaking Ability

Nurwanto¹, Tengku Intan Suzila, T.S² Akmaal³, Utami Widiawati⁴, Anik Nunuk Wulyani⁴ and Sari Karmina⁴

¹PPM MBS Pleret Yogyakarta, Indonesia, ²Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Cawangan Pahang, 26400 Bandar Jengka, Malaysia, ³Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Jogjakarta, Indonesia, ⁴Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Email: intansuzila@uitm.edu.my

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Abstract

The study aims are to describe the significance effect of paraphrasing techniques teaching in improving students speaking ability at Muhammadiyah Boarding School Pleret Yogyakarta and to know which type of paraphrasing technique is most used by the students. The study is conducted using quasi-experimental research with 22 students as samples. The experimental group was taught using paraphrasing techniques (using synonyms, change word class, change word order, and change active to passive or vice versa) and the control group was not given a treatment. The data is collected by recording the students' paraphrasing personal recount text in speaking activity. The instruments used are IELTS Speaking band descriptor, taxonomy of paraphrasing types and collected data is analyzed descriptively and adopting independent t-test using SPSS version 22. The results show the treatment of the teaching paraphrasing techniques improves the students' speaking ability. It proved that the p-value (sig. 2-tailed: 0.001) was smaller than 0.025. Thereafter, the most paraphrasing technique used by the students was using synonymous words where it was applied 115 times (64 %) from all the students/participants. These findings have assisted in building an app suitable for teaching speaking.

Keywords: Paraphrasing Technique, Speaking Ability, Students

Introduction

Speaking has been one of the essential language skills, along with reading, listening, and writing. Speaking can be defined as a process of constructing and sharing meaning by utilizing either verbal or non-verbal symbols in various contexts (Chaney, 1998: 13). Hence, it should be acquired by English learners. As a productive skill, speakers are to display a communicative speaking skill demanded to produce a satisfactory result of processing a language.

Speaking is known as a primary language skill. Rao (2019: 8) states that speaking skill is a critical skill to acquire in foreign or second language learning. Understanding the art of

speaking is, therefore, required in learning a second or foreign language. It aims to measure the capability in constructing a conversation in the language. Bailey and Savage (1994: 7) express that out of the four skills in a second or foreign language, speaking has frequently been considered as the most demanding one for language learners. In a learning process, speaking is one of the skills that students must be able to perform. Thus, boosting students' speaking skill is one of the aims of English language teaching so that they can develop their English ability.

Hornby (1995) states that speaking is an ability where students will be evaluated upon most in real-life circumstances. In short, it is a basic portion of regular interaction, and most regularly, the first impression of an individual is based on his/her capability to speak easily and comprehensively. "Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information" (Burns & Joyce, 1997: 50). Speaking demands learners not only to realize how to create particular focuses of language such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar, but also to comprehend why, when, and how to express language or sociolinguistic competence. Put it differently, speaking has its construction and traditions distinctive from written language.

Brown (2001) states that speaking is widely recognized as the most crucial skill as it is one of the skills responsible for conducting conversations. It is a preparation for building meaning intuitively, which includes the creation, reception, and handling of information. Therefore, the learners should possess the ability to speak English to communicate with others using verbal, meaning they must use correct pronunciation to execute the communication fluently. English is difficult for Indonesian learners. However, the goal of language teaching is for communication.

Realizing the importance of speaking for English learners, therefore, English teachers need to encourage the students to speak. Widyaningsih & Robiasih (2018: 3) state that the essence of teaching speaking is to make students able to speak fluently. It can be achieved if the methods used by teachers are highly effective. In this case, teachers have the responsibility to guide the students during the learning process, as well as to motivate them to enhance their English, especially in speaking skills.

Making students speak in the class is quite difficult because English is a foreign language. Students prefer using their mother tongue than English. Moreover, the environments do not support them in speaking English. Consequently, it results in them seldom using English either in the classroom or in real conversation. It explains why many students are still experiencing difficulty speaking English in their life. Tuan and Mai (2015) found that students' poor speaking performance was influenced by several factors such as the use of mother tongue in the learning process, lack of motivation, lack of vocabulary, and involvement within the teaching activities. Hamad (2013) explains some negative factors influencing students' speaking ability, such as students being hesitant to speak English in front of the public, the use of mother tongue in teaching, the less use of English in discussion activities, teachers not providing support and time for students, curriculum lacking speaking exercises, and the less of speaking section.

In Indonesia, speaking has been emphasized and becomes one of the students' daily activities. Unfortunately, most of them worry and feel not confident when they have to speak English for oral communication (Haidara, 2016). The difficulty they have is in producing the words, or the inability to think of what to say. To solve these speaking problems, English teachers should select and utilize a suitable technique for the teaching and learning process.

Various techniques can be utilized to improve students' speaking skill achievement, one of which is the paraphrasing technique. Paraphrasing expresses the meaning of something using different words (Panggua, 2014:1). By using paraphrasing, students can represent someone else's ideas while still maintaining the main ideas of the source through their own words (Murphy, 2009). In addition to improving students' ideas, the paraphrasing technique can also increase students' vocabulary.

Paraphrasing is a quite difficult task for most students in learning English. Moreover, Keck (2014) mentions that paraphrasing in a second or foreign language is deemed to be harder than in a mother tongue, particularly for inexperienced language learners within the academic realm. He further adds that the lack of awareness of the paraphrasing significances and techniques for conducting it becomes the main reason for their failure to paraphrase effectively.

Such problems can be overcome with effective paraphrasing techniques for students. Vanitha (2017:1) argues that effective paraphrasing always helps in saving the messages in the long-time memory. Thereby, students can produce their own words according to the core information of the passage without having to change its meaning.

In line with the importance of the technique, the writer has conducted observations at Muhammadiyah Boarding School Pleret Yogyakarta and found some problems, 1) The students face difficulties in restating the meaning of the idea of others by using alternative words verbally. 2) Some teaching media applied by English teachers are less effective in improving students' abilities. As a result, students become ignorant of techniques and strategies to improve their speaking ability.

The above problems underlie this exploratory study. The implementation of the paraphrasing technique will be perceived to see if it can increase students' speaking skills. However, in the context of teaching speaking, the effectiveness of the above evidence should be discovered. To gain evidence, this research needs to be conducted. The following are the aim/purpose of this study: (1) To find evidence on the significant effect of using paraphrasing techniques in improving students' speaking ability at Muhammadiyah Boarding school Pleret Yogyakarta. (2) To discover the type of paraphrasing technique most used by the students in improving their speaking ability.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were one class of the tenth-grade students of Muhammadiyah Boarding School Pleret Bantul Yogyakarta. The number of participants was 22 students. Gold (2012) explains that a simple power calculation could optimize sample size in intervention studies, meaning that the researcher does not need 30 participants (suitable for survey type of study) as the sample in this quasi-experimental research. The researcher divided 22 students into two groups, in which 11 students were in the experimental group, and 11 others were in the control group. The researcher employed purposive sampling to determine the sample. As the significant value was set at $p > 0.025$, a two-tailed analysis was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention suiting the small sampling. The initial English diagnostic test regulated the almost equal English proficiency level causing the division conducted conveniently.

Material

In gathering the required data for this study, the researcher employed a test adapted from Pangua (2014) and Faizin (2019). The test was in the form of a speaking monologue test.

The test would be provided twice, before and after treatments. The pre-test was intended to determine the initial speaking ability of the sample, and the post-test was designed to check whether the paraphrasing techniques affect their speaking ability.

To determine the significant effect of paraphrasing techniques for improving the students' speaking ability, the initial step was scoring the students' speaking ability performed by two raters using the IELTS speaking band descriptor. Pell (2015) states that learning paraphrasing is an essential skill before taking the IELTS test either for writing or speaking. Tomlinson and Aish (2014) add that students in lower, pre-intermediate level could start preparing for the IELTS. They also suggest that grammar and vocabulary should be taught in the classroom to develop the lower and pre-intermediate level students before taking the IELTS test. Therefore, IELTS bands are suitable for grading paraphrasing attempts in speaking ability. The results, after that, were analyzed statistically using the t-test in SPSS version 22. Then, to discover the significant difference of average between the control and the experimental groups, an independent sample t-test was employed.

To identify and analyze the paraphrasing strategies used by the students, the researcher employed a taxonomy of paraphrasing types proposed by Kech (2014) using the variable of unique links, four mutually exclusive taxonomy categories, or paraphrase types, consisting of near copy (50% or more words contained within unique links), minimal revision (20–49% words contained within unique links), moderate revision (1–19% words contained within unique links), and substantial revision (no unique link). The taxonomy of paraphrase helped the researcher to identify and analyze the contents.

To find the type of paraphrasing techniques mostly applied by the students, the researcher used a rubric of students' paraphrasing analysis adapted from Faizin (2019). The rubric was employed to analyze the data after recording students' paraphrases and writing the transcript into the field sheet. The post-test data were analyzed to classify the type of paraphrasing techniques mostly applied by students both in the control and experimental groups.

Procedure

To conduct the research, the following test was taken. First, before giving treatments for the experimental group, the researcher carried out the pre-test on both the control and the experimental groups to discover the essential score or quality of the students' speaking ability. In this part, the researcher delivered a personal recount text about the holiday experience. The students understood the content of the text for about one hour, and then they retold the story in their own words. Their efforts were rated by using the instrument of the IELTS speaking band descriptor. This test involved two raters in obtaining more reliable data.

Then, the experimental group received treatments for five days. The researcher guided and encouraged the students to use paraphrasing techniques consisting of using synonyms, changing word classes, changing word order, and changing active voice to passive voice, or vice versa. The paraphrasing techniques applied are those proposed by Davies (2013), Bailey (2016), Vanitha (2017), and Hans (2017) using a model of classroom teaching strategy adapted from Hans (2017) as follows.

- 1) Pre-activity: The teacher explained the meaning of paraphrasing, the purpose of studying paraphrasing, and then gave examples of useful written paraphrases.
- 2) Whilst-activity: Some activities in this stage are as follows:
 - a) The teacher distributed a personal recount text to students.

- b) The students then analyzed the text to understand the main idea, the main supporting points, and the supporting details.
 - c) The teacher asked the students to rewrite the text using their own words by changing the vocabulary, using synonyms, changing word classes, changing word order, and changing active voice to passive voice, or vice versa.
 - d) The teacher asked the students to close their text and gave them time to memorize it and then tried to retell it orally as a practice.
 - e) The teacher checks the students' efforts.
- 3) Post-activity: In this section, the teacher gave feedback through a discussion regarding their results from a comparison of the original text with paraphrased text.

The post-test was given after doing several treatments for the experimental group. The test was conducted for both the control and the experimental groups. It was conducted to determine students' speaking ability after receiving treatments of paraphrasing techniques in the experimental group and without getting treatments in the control group.

A personal recount text about holiday experience was given to the students. The students paraphrased it in the form of monologue after being given one hour to memorize it, and then the researcher recorded them. The two raters scored the students' efforts using the instrument of IELTS speaking band descriptor. This band was employed as it is an established internationally accepted descriptor, therefore, making the findings of the study relevant.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The first research question addressed the significant effect of using paraphrasing techniques in improving students' speaking ability at Muhammadiyah Boarding school Pleret Yogyakarta. In response to the question, the results of the post-test data analysis from the control and experimental groups, the researcher calculated the data using an independent sample t-test. The purpose was to find a significant difference between speaking scores of students who learned using paraphrasing techniques and those who did not use them.

Table 1.

Group Statistics

	Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	With Treatments	11	5.7364	.30091	.09073
	Without Treatments	11	5.2364	.29757	.08972

Table 2.

Independent Sample T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	0.085	0.774	3.919	20	0.001	0.5	0.1276	0.23384	0.76616
	Equal variances not assumed			3.919	19.998	0.001	0.5	0.1276	0.23384	0.76616

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare students receiving treatments of paraphrasing techniques, and those who did not receive them. There was a significant difference in the scores of 11 students receiving the treatments of paraphrasing techniques (M: 5.7364, SD: 0.30091) and 11 other students who did not receive the treatments (M: 5.2364, SD: 0.29757) conditions ($t(20): 3.919, p 0.001$) where ($p < 0.025$). These results suggested that paraphrasing techniques affected students' speaking ability. In short, students' speaking ability increased when they employed paraphrasing techniques.

The researchers then measured the students' paraphrases from the results of the post-test (both control and experimental groups). To find out the students' ability in paraphrasing, the researcher utilized a taxonomy of paraphrasing types (Keck, 2014). Keck classified paraphrases into four categories comprising near copy, minimal revision, moderate revision, and substantial revision. The results of the students' efforts in paraphrasing are presented below.

Table 3.

Taxonomy of Paraphrasing Types in the Control Group

No	N	Student s' Names	Original Text	Paraphrase Text	Unique Link		Paraphrase Types
					Words	%	
1	1	Student	224	66	57	4	86. Near copy
2	2	Student	224	97	82	5	84. Near copy
3	3	Student	224	73	59	8	80. Near copy
4	4	Student	224	67	61	0	91. Near copy
5	5	Student	224	115	97	3	84. Near copy
6	6	Student	224	58	52	7	89. Near copy
7	7	Student	224	132	117	6	88. Near copy
8	8	Student	224	128	110	9	85. Near copy
9	9	Student	224	108	104	3	96. Near copy
0	10	Student	224	96	82	4	85. Near copy
1	11	Student	224	77	66	7	85. Near copy
Average			224	92	81	87	

Table 4.

Taxonomy of Paraphrasing Types in the Experimental Group

No	Student Names	Original Text	Paraphrase Text	Unique Link		Paraphrase Types
				Words	%	
1	Student A	224	94	66	70.2	Near copy
2	Student B	224	111	33	29.7	Minimal Revision
3	Student C	224	98	68	69.4	Near copy
4	Student D	224	74	56	75.7	Near copy
5	Student E	224	99	32	32.3	Minimal Revision
6	Student F	224	108	42	38.9	Minimal Revision
7	Student G	224	148	100	67.6	Near copy
8	Student H	224	86	67	77.9	Near copy
9	Student I	224	129	58	45.0	Minimal Revision
10	Student J	224	126	53	42.1	Minimal Revision
11	Student K	224	104	46	44.2	Minimal Revision
Average		224	107	56	54	

Based on the results, in the post-test, all students in the control class preferred to use near copy in paraphrasing the text. Meanwhile, table 4 shows that in the post-test, six students of the experimental group tended to use minimal revision, and five others were likely to use near copy in paraphrasing the text.

The second research question investigated the type of paraphrasing technique most used by the students in improving their speaking ability. After classifying the students' efforts in paraphrasing, the researcher analyzed types of paraphrasing techniques applied by the students. The results were used to determine the most used technique in improving students' speaking ability. Here are the results of paraphrasing rubric analysis:

Table 5.

Result of Paraphrasing Techniques Analysis

No	Participants	Using synonyms	Change word classes	Change word order	Change active to passive voices or vice versa	Total
1	Student 1	0	0	1	0	1
2	Student 2	2	0	1	0	3
3	Student 3	2	1	0	0	3
4	Student 4	2	0	1	0	3
5	Student 5	3	1	1	0	5
6	Student 6	1	0	0	0	1
7	Student 7	2	3	2	0	7
8	Student 8	4	3	1	0	8
9	Student 9	1	0	0	0	1
10	Student 10	2	0	1	0	3
11	Student 11	2	0	0	0	2
12	Student A	4	0	2	0	6
13	Student B	13	4	5	0	22
14	Student C	7	2	2	0	11
15	Student D	3	0	1	0	4
16	Student E	6	1	5	0	12
17	Student F	10	2	4	1	17
18	Student G	15	4	1	0	20
19	Student H	2	0	1	0	3
20	Student I	14	1	3	0	18
21	Student J	11	2	3	0	16
22	Student K	9	2	2	0	13
Total		115	26	37	1	179
%		64	15	21	0.6	100

Table 5 presents the paraphrasing techniques used by 22 students (both in the control and experimental groups) who paraphrased a text in the post-test. The result shows that most students used synonyms to paraphrase the text. It can be seen from the results above that this technique was used 115 times (64 %) by all students.

Discussion

After the data were gathered and analyzed using the software of SPSS version 22, the results revealed that the p-value (Sig. (2-tailed) was smaller than 0.025 ($p < 0.025$). Therefore, there was a significant difference between the speaking scores of students who learned using paraphrasing techniques and those who did not use them. In conclusion, the teaching of

paraphrasing techniques has managed to significantly improve the tenth-grade students' speaking ability at Muhammadiyah Boarding School Pleret Yogyakarta after 5 days through drilling paraphrasing teaching approach. The paraphrasing techniques affected the improvement of students' speaking ability at Muhammadiyah Boarding School Pleret Yogyakarta. Hence H_a (alternative hypothesis) was accepted, and H_o (null hypothesis) was rejected. It was because the students who were receiving treatments of paraphrasing techniques had better achievement in speaking than those without treatments. It can be proven from the score result of $t(20) = 3.919$ and $p = 0.001$ where $p < 0.025$. Improvement of speaking ability was also obtained in previous studies conducted by Panggua (2015) and Muhammad Faizin (2019).

The results of the students' paraphrasing through speaking monologs were gathered and analyzed using a taxonomy of paraphrasing types (Keck: 2014). The data were utilized to discover the students' ability to paraphrase. The results showed that all students in the control class tended to use near copy in paraphrasing the text in the post-test. Meanwhile, six students of the experimental group were likely to use minimal revision, and five other students of this group tended to use near copy in paraphrasing the text in the post-test. It was difficult for those students to retell a text with their own words (paraphrasing). Likewise, Keck (2014) highlights that paraphrasing in a second or foreign language is generally considered more difficult than in a mother tongue, especially for language learners inexperienced in the academic world.

The next step was analyzing the types of paraphrasing techniques used by the students (both in the experimental and control groups) in the post-test. The results showed that the most paraphrasing technique used by the students was using synonyms. This technique was applied 115 times (64 %) by all students. They preferred using synonyms rather than other paraphrasing techniques. It was because finding a synonym of words was considered quite easy for the students. The technique is simple as the students do not have to change the structure of words or sentences to paraphrase it. Chi Do, Na et al. (2017) found that the participants preferred using synonyms than changing sentence structures because they were afraid that the transformation might change the meaning.

Moreover, it is also easy to find synonyms for words online at Thesaurus.com or Google Translate. Vanitha (2017: 2) also states that by using a dictionary and thesaurus, words can be replaced with their equivalent and standard and easy to understand. Unfortunately, some difficulties might come through this technique. Dangli and Abazaj (2014: 629) explain that, in most cases, thesaurus provides "near-synonyms, or simply semantically related words", but "do not always imply interchangeability". Davies (2011) also conveys that choosing synonyms not only refers to a good thesaurus or dictionary but also must pay attention to usage. It is because not all synonym words can be used in the same way or have the same meaning.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusion

Improving speaking skills has become one of the most challenging attempts for foreign language learners. It requires an effective technique to improve students' speaking ability. Based on the research findings, the results explained that the teaching of paraphrasing techniques has managed to significantly improve the tenth-grade students' speaking ability at Muhammadiyah Boarding School Pleret Yogyakarta after 5 days through the drilling paraphrasing approach. The effectiveness of paraphrasing techniques for improving students'

speaking ability was also proven by Panggua (2014). Therefore, paraphrasing techniques become essential to be applied in the teaching and learning process.

Nevertheless, the success of the students' speaking score was not followed by the quality of their paraphrasing ability in this research. In general, their taxonomy of paraphrasing type increased but not significant enough. The researcher was aware that the limited time of the treatments and limitations in face-to-face learning had impacted this study. An effective paraphrasing technique suitable for students' English capability and enough time for classroom teaching and learning is required to solve the problem.

From the paraphrasing techniques applied in the treatments (using synonyms, changing word classes, changing word order, and changing active voice to passive voice, or vice versa), most of the students preferred using synonyms in paraphrasing. They were likely to use synonyms rather than change sentence structures because it might change the essence of the original source if they lack grammar skills. Hence, it requires more understanding and practices to improve students' grammar ability to apply paraphrasing techniques.

Suggestion

Several suggestions after conducting the research are intended both for educators, students, and the next researchers.

a. For students

It is highly suggested for the students to practice paraphrasing and try using several techniques when paraphrasing a text. It will improve their capability to avoid plagiarism and enhance their speaking ability. Some sources can be accessed by students to help them to learn. This opportunity should be put to proper use to enhance their knowledge.

b. For the next researchers

The results of this research are expected to encourage other researchers to conduct investigations related to the study. The development and innovative study from other researchers are expected in the next research.

c. For educators

Paraphrasing is essential for students to learn. Therefore, it should become an alternative technique applied by English educators in the teaching and learning process. Innovative, interesting, and effective paraphrasing techniques are more expected by students to support their speaking and paraphrasing.

The findings of this study have guided the innovation of an app “Speak Now 1 & 2) to assist teachers to teach speaking. Therefore, a concept of the app is presented here (Figure1).

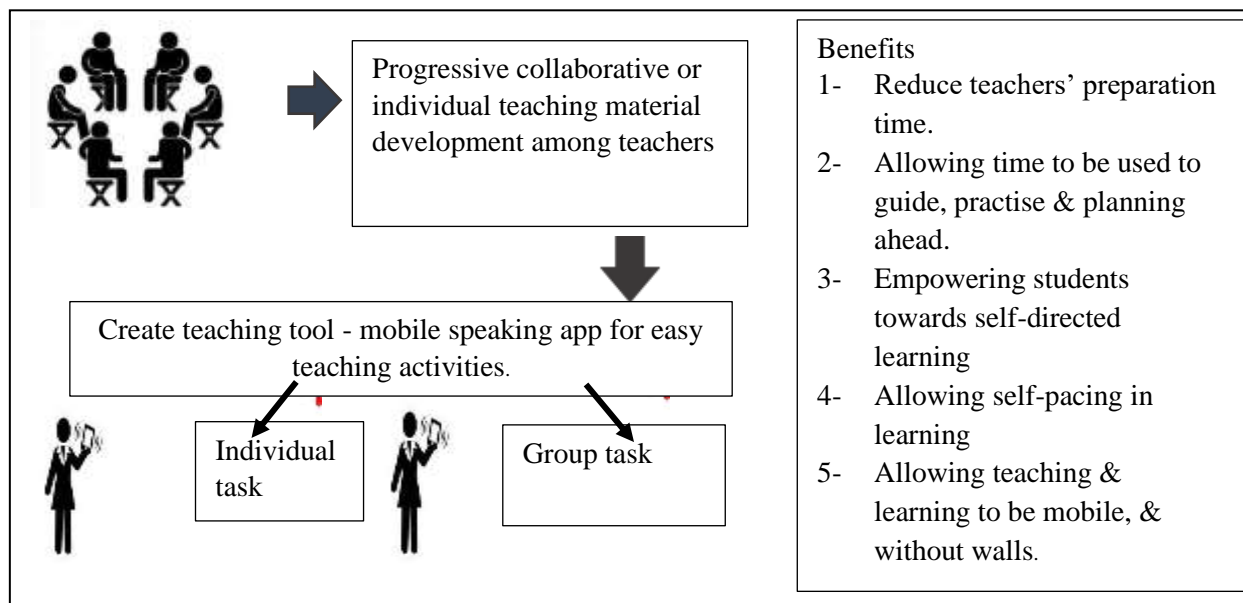


Figure 1 A concept of the “Speak Now” individual & group work apps.

Each app will be equipped with learning objectives and outcomes. Activities of each app will be suitable for teachers to boost their impact in classroom. Paraphrasing will be one of the techniques listed in the app alongside other activities like group discussion and picture naming. The activities are also arranged according to the level of difficulties. The app will assist the teachers tremendously. The benefits are as listed in Figure 1.

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