



## Metacognitive Strategies for Overcoming Paraphrasing Challenges in EFL Students' Thesis Writing

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### ABSTRACT

Paraphrasing is a key ability in academic writing. It shows that students can understand, interpret, and reiterate information while still being honest in their work. In contrast, many students learning English as a foreign language still struggle with paraphrasing, which is often owing to weak language skills and the absence of appropriate learning methods. This study explores how English Education students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung use metacognitive methods, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation, to overcome difficulties with paraphrase in their thesis writing. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were obtained using close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students in their last year of study. The thematic analysis shows that students who prepare carefully, check their understanding and how well they express themselves, and assess the quality and originality of their paraphrased work likely to create reformulations that are both cohesive and free from plagiarism. The findings indicate the necessity of developing metacognitive awareness to encourage learner independence and improve paraphrasing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing.

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### INTRODUCTION

Paraphrasing is an essential skill in academic writing, enabling students to demonstrate comprehension, reinterpret ideas, and maintain academic integrity when engaging with scholarly resources. Despite its importance, many EFL students struggle to produce accurate and original paraphrases, sometimes resorting to superficial methods such as synonym replacement or simple sentence modification. These methods frequently lead to misinterpretation or unintentional plagiarism, indicating a lack of both training and strategic comprehension in academic writing contexts (Marzuki et al., 2023). This challenge is most evident in thesis writing, where

students are required to synthesize complex academic sources and express them in their own voice. Recent research underscores the essential role of strategies planning, monitoring, and evaluating in enhancing students' writing efforts (Namaziandost, 2025). These tactics, utilized in academic settings, enhance learners' cognitive engagement with textual content, direct their language selections, and allow them to evaluate the accuracy and coherence of their written outputs (Teng & Huang, 2023). Moreover, individuals with increased metacognitive awareness are more proficient in recognizing textual connections, regulating anxiety, and demonstrating autonomy during paraphrase tasks. In contrast, studies examining the use of metacognitive methods in thesis-level paraphrase are now limited. Most present research focus on general writing skills instead of the specific paraphrasing demands associated with extended academic writing (Ader et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2018; Teng, 2025; Wu et al., 2025). This indicates a lack of understanding regarding how undergraduate EFL students navigate their learning processes when paraphrasing complex academic materials during thesis writing. Closing this gap is crucial, as thesis writing requires enhanced language precision, critical analysis, and compliance with academic standards. This study analyzes the metacognitive methods utilized by final-year English Education students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung to address paraphrase challenges in thesis writing. This research aims to clarify the role of metacognitive regulation in promoting accurate, coherent, and ethically sound paraphrasing in EFL academic contexts, based on an analysis of planning, monitoring, and evaluation practices obtained from interviews and close-ended questionnaires.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to examine students' metacognitive processes in paraphrasing during thesis writing. A closed-ended questionnaire was incorporated, however it served solely as supplementary data. The primary qualitative data was derived from semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected via purposive sampling, consisting of 25 final-year students who completed the questionnaire and 6 students who participated in interviews. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items (1-5) focused on planning, monitoring, evaluation, and emotional control. The interview questions were designed according to Flavell's metacognitive components (Flavell, 1979), investigating how students strategized their paraphrasing process, ensured semantic accuracy, evaluated clarity and originality, and regulated their emotions during the paraphrasing job. The data collection process occurred in three stages: distributing the questionnaire, selecting interview participants, and conducting the interviews while documenting the responses. All interviews were recorded with permission and lasted between 20 to 30 minutes.

Data were examined utilizing six-step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), with the coding method informed by Flavell's metacognitive categories.

Questionnaire responses were utilized solely to substantiate and contextualize the themes arising from interview data, without the application of numerical or statistical analysis. Trustworthiness was established via member screening for credibility, an audit trail for dependability, peer debriefing for confirmability, and comprehensive contextual description for transferability. Ethical approval was secured from the English Education Study Program, and all participants granted informed consent before engaging in the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The analysis of interview responses revealed three key themes demonstrating the utilization of metacognitive strategies by final-year students in paraphrasing for thesis writing. During the planning phase, most participants acknowledged situations requiring paraphrasing, including when a sentence closely mirrored the source, was overly lengthy, confusing, or when supervisors identified shortcomings in their drafts. Before paraphrasing, students generally review the source text multiple times to ensure comprehensive understanding, highlight essential concepts, identify important vocabulary, and strive to express the main idea in their own words. Numerous participants emphasized the need of selecting suitable terminology throughout the planning phase.

Second, in the monitoring stage, students consistently checked their rendition of the text to the original to ensure accuracy. They verified the accuracy of meaning, sentence structure, and coherence, and promptly made alterations if their paraphrase closely resembled the source. Many individuals utilized digital tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, or dictionaries to verify their grammar, clarity, and vocabulary selections. Students reported difficulties in identifying appropriate synonyms under observation; nevertheless, they employed several tactics, such as altering phrase structure, clarifying their concepts, modifying word forms, and segmenting lengthy sentences into shorter ones.

Third, during the evaluation phase, students examined their paraphrased text to determine if it sufficiently diverged from the source while maintaining the same meaning. They scrutinized for superfluous details, ensured their paraphrasing aligned with their writing style, and verified the accuracy of the message. Several individuals reported examining both versions concurrently to assess their structural similarity, clarity, and to ensure that no critical information was omitted. Prior to determining the adequacy of the outcomes, numerous students assessed the accuracy, coherence, grammar, and relevancy of the paraphrased outputs generated by the tools. Participants assessed their paraphrasing process by identifying positives, such as improved clarity or consistency, and shortcomings, namely overdependence on tools or difficulties in reducing complex concepts.

**Table 1. Summary of Questionnaire Findings from 25 EFL Students**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Student Responses (Summary)</b>	<b>General Framework</b>
Planning	The majority of students indicated that they comprehended the source material initially and deliberately devised their paraphrase.	Students demonstrate significant understanding of strategizing before to paraphrasing.
Monitoring	Students monitored their work by utilizing grammar checks, plagiarism detectors, and directly comparing it to the original materials.	Individuals engage in monitoring through the utilization of digital tools and self-assessment.
Evaluating	Students revised and enhanced their paraphrasing, particularly following criticism from their supervisor or classmates.	Assessment is deemed crucial for ensuring precision and transparency.
Metacognitive Engagement	Students demonstrated heightened confidence, motivation, and autonomy with consistent practice.	Elevated awareness of metacognitive involvement in paraphrase activities.

The questionnaire results corroborate the interview findings, demonstrating that students consistently participate in planning, monitoring, and evaluating during the paraphrase process. The integration of both data sources indicates that EFL students comprehend the cognitive processes involved and purposefully and adaptively employ them when encountering paraphrase difficulties in thesis writing.

## **Discussion**

### **The Application of Metacognitive Strategies in Paraphrasing**

The findings indicate that final-year EFL students employ metacognitive methods in a systematic and intentional manner, as delineated by Flavell's paradigm. These tactics encompass planning, monitoring, and assessment. In the planning phase, students demonstrated a comprehension of the necessity of paraphrasing by identifying sentences that were overly similar to the source or unclear, reflecting a strong metacognitive awareness of tasks and cognitive demands. This aligns with previous studies suggesting that students with heightened metacognitive awareness are more proficient in identifying paraphrase needs and preparing effectively before revision (Teng, 2025). The participants' approach of rereading, highlighting essential concepts, and verifying comprehension before paraphrasing underscores the importance of planning as a vital metacognitive process that facilitates substantial text alteration.

Students said that while under observation, they consistently verified the authenticity and originality of their paraphrases by comparing them to the source material and utilizing resources such as Grammarly or plagiarism detection software (Waziana et al., 2025). Their monitoring tactics resemble current knowledge: digital tools can enhance students' self-regulation and awareness of their language selections during paraphrasing (Trinovita et al., 2025). Monitoring also encompassed altering phrase structures, modifying word forms, rephrasing themes, or segmenting lengthy sentences. These behaviors exemplify adaptive

metacognitive control, wherein pupils modify their techniques according to the difficulty of the task. These activities illustrate active interaction with the text and an attempt to avoid patchwriting, a common challenge faced by EFL thesis authors.

Evaluation emerged as a crucial stage wherein students appraised the clarity, accuracy, and originality of their paraphrases, often employing comments from supervisors or peers to identify shortcomings. This reflective process aligns with research indicating that evaluation enhances students' awareness of their writing quality and improves their techniques over time (Andewi et al., 2025). The questionnaire results supported this hypothesis, revealing that most students believed consistent evaluation improved their confidence and autonomy. In conclusion, our findings indicate that final-year students employ metacognitive processes seamlessly during the paraphrasing process.

### **Challenges Faced by Students in Paraphrasing**

The students encountered many hurdles reflective of both language and metacognitive issues commonly noted in academic writing research. A significant issue was the difficulty in identifying appropriate synonyms and rephrasing lengthy statements. This aligns with research indicating that EFL students frequently struggle with altering sentence structure and vocabulary due to a limited lexicon (Darwin et al., 2024). Students who relied heavily on verbatim substitution tended to produce paraphrases that closely resembled the source text. This indicated that they were struggling to employ advanced metacognitive processes such as meaning reconstruction.

Another problem was ensuring that the message remained unchanged when paraphrasing. Students were uncertain when verifying if their altered sentences conveyed the same meaning as the original material. This issue parallels previous findings: EFL students frequently prioritize plagiarism avoidance over clarity and coherence (Slamet, 2024). Due to this ambiguity, students occasionally depended excessively on digital tools, which, although beneficial, sometimes produced paraphrases that were nonsensical or awkward. This dependence illustrates the significance of enhancing metacognitive monitoring abilities and linguistic discernment.

There were indications of emotional issues. Several students expressed concern or uncertainty over the paraphrasing of complex academic texts, particularly in response to feedback from their supervisor. This pertains to research indicating that emotional regulation is an intrinsic component of metacognitive engagement, influencing students' motivation and confidence during writing tasks in educational settings (Yang et al., 2025). The questionnaire responses corroborated this. Students indicated that consistent practice and constructive feedback assisted them in overcoming emotional barriers, hence enhancing their

confidence in paraphrasing.

These issues demonstrate that paraphrase entails not only linguistic proficiency but also needs planning, monitoring, analyzing, and regulating one's emotions. Although students effectively employed metacognitive strategies, the limitations they identified underscore the need for enhanced instructional support, particularly in enhancing lexical manipulation, strengthening monitoring abilities, and fostering positive writing self-efficacy.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study examined the application of metacognitive strategies by final-year EFL students in paraphrasing and the challenges encountered in thesis writing. The findings demonstrate that students purposefully and actively employ the three components of metacognitive regulation, planning, monitoring, and evaluation as proposed by Flavell. They prepare to paraphrase by thoroughly comprehending the source material, monitor their rewriting by consistently comparing it to the original and utilizing digital tools, and evaluate their work by assessing the accuracy, clarity, and distinctiveness of the meaning and structure. These activities demonstrate that students possess a keen awareness of the challenges associated with paraphrasing and employ metacognitive methods to effectively navigate those demands.

Nonetheless, students continue to struggle with language and metacognition, particularly when confronted with complex concepts, selecting appropriate terminology, ensuring comprehension, and overcoming their apprehension around academic writing. Certain students developed an excessive dependence on digital tools, notwithstanding their use. This indicated that they required enhancement in self-regulation and vocabulary acquisition. Feedback from supervisors and consistent practice were two crucial factors that enhanced students' confidence and autonomy in paraphrasing.

The findings indicate that metacognitive methods are crucial for assisting EFL students in overcoming the challenges of paraphrasing in thesis writing. Improving instructional support via explicit training in paraphrasing approaches, guided practice with metacognitive strategies, and opportunities for reflective feedback may further enhance students' accuracy, confidence, and self-directed learning in academic writing. Future research may expand the sample size, explore disciplinary differences, or examine the effects of metacognitive technique training on students' long-term paraphrase effectiveness.

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