

On the Exploration of the Teaching of Paraphrasing in Integrated English Course

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Abstract

The teaching of Integrated English should include listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating in terms of the characteristics of Integrated English. The students' overall language application skills should be improved in practice through the learning of Integrated English. Paraphrasing exercise is the key point as well as the difficult point in Integrated English teaching as the ability of paraphrasing can show the students' understanding and mastery of the texts, furthermore, reflecting the students' language application ability in practice. This paper aims to summarize the basic steps in paraphrasing by offering explanations of the example sentences taken from the text, with the hope of guiding teaching practice of paraphrasing to a certain extent.

Keywords: Paraphrasing; Context; Understanding; Expression

1.Introduction

In the third and fourth volumes of "An Integrated English Course" published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, there are several paraphrasing exercises of complex sentences in each unit, and the requirement is "to explain the following sentences in your own words". Paraphrasing itself is very flexible. It is not a simple synonym replacement or explanation of new words or phrases in the sentences, nor is it a simple conversion of forms or voices. Besides, there is no final conclusion to what extent the original sentence should be paraphrased. In the author's opinion, paraphrasing is an activity that the readers analyze the syntax and logical relations of complex sentences based on a thorough understanding of the original sentence in the specific language background, and then use their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar to re-integrate the language information (some semantic information can be supplemented if necessary), so as to organize a sentence that is easy to understand, conforms to the grammar rules and is expressed smoothly. With many years of teaching practice of integrated English, the author realized the significance of paraphrasing, since it can not only reflect the students' understanding of the text, but also can test whether the students have the ability to use appropriate words and standard grammar to express the meaning of sentences.

2. The Definition of Paraphrase

Paraphrase is defined in The English-Chinese Dictionary as an explanation and free translation of several sentences (as a change of wording in language teaching). The following definition is found in Collins Dictionary: a paraphrase is an account, sentence, or expression that gives the meaning of another account, sentence or expression in a different way. In addition, Oxford Advanced English Chinese Dictionary defines it as a statement that expresses sth that sb has written or said using different words, especially in order to make it easier to

understand. According to the above entries in authoritative dictionaries, we can conclude as follows: "paraphrasing is an activity to express the meaning of the original sentence in different ways (different from the original sentence in terms of words and language structure) to facilitate understanding."

3. The Significance of Paraphrasing

As an important skill, paraphrasing is not only reflected in the text learning of integrated English, but also involves other aspects of English learning. In the academic writing, we need to adopt others' views, which requires a thorough understanding of these views, and then express them in our own language, rather than simply copying. In short, paraphrasing presupposes an accurate and thorough understanding of the original text. It not only tests the accuracy of students' understanding of the original text, but also requires the students to express the complicated thoughts in easily understood language, so as to reflect the students' ability to use the language flexibly. Using paraphrasing can effectively avoid the monotony of writing or expression, and make the sentence patterns more flexible and changeable.

4. The Approaches and Methods of Paraphrasing

Reading comprehension is a special cognitive activity of human beings, which not only includes the understanding of sentences separately, but also combines the current processing information with the previous background to form a local and overall coherent psychological representation (Tian Yanming, Wang Shujie, 2010). It is particularly important to understand the original text and express it in our own language, which embodies the processes of input and output, and paraphrasing can well reflect the whole process. There have been a lot of studies on the methods of paraphrasing before. In the author's opinion, the approach to paraphrase a sentence well should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and there is no universal method. However, in teaching practice, the teachers can follow the following basic steps:

1. Analyze the grammatical structure, find the main body and other modifying elements of the sentence.
2. Deeply understand the meaning of key words in context, find synonyms of key words in known words, and then replace or explain the original words.
3. Comprehend the semantic relationship reflected by context, and then rewrite it, in which the semantics can be supplemented appropriately to express the meaning completely.
4. Finally, read the sentence, clear the logic, and adjust the sentence flexibly to make the rewritten sentence simple with correct grammar and reasonable logic.

5. The Concept of Context

In the author's opinion, in the discussion of the approaches, context is an important concept and an important factor in sentence paraphrasing. From the perspective of reading comprehension, context can be divided into broad context and narrow context. Broad context refers to all the linguistic environments, including not only the narrow context, but also the linguistic environment beyond language. The latter can be further divided into situational context and personal context. Situational context is an objective context, such as the occasion of communication, pictures related to words, etc. Personal context is subjective, such as personal cultural schema, views, knowledge and personality. The narrow sense of context refers to the intralingual context or lexical context, which is often referred to as the text itself. The context of written materials mainly refers to the text before and after, which can be a word, a phrase, a sentence or a paragraph (Tian Yanming,

Wang Shujie, 2010). The context the author has wanted to discuss here mainly refers to the narrow context. Context plays an important role in the process of paraphrasing, such as promoting or inhibiting the recognition of target words. The research shows that context can indeed affect cognitive process, anticipate the subsequent text, resolve ambiguity, constrain semantic relations, facilitate understanding and infer new knowledge. (Tian Yanming, Wang Shujie, 2010)

6. The Analysis of Example Sentences

Example 1

One way was to step up the level of danger or licentiousness or alcohol or drug consumption so that you could be sure that, no matter what, you would manage to have a little fun.

To paraphrase the sentence successfully, the basic requirement is to understand it. The main part of this sentence is "One way was to step up", followed by the objective clause introduced by "so that". The clause contains a modal verb "could", followed by a concession adverbial clause "no matter what...". On the basis of understanding the sentence structure, the second step is to figure out the key words. "Step up" is a new phrase, meaning "to increase the amount, speed, etc. of sth". When paraphrasing, the teachers should first guide students to choose an appropriate expression from their vocabulary to explain or replace them. According to the dictionary, the word "indulge" means "to allow yourself to have or do sth that you like, especially sth that is considered bad for you", which is usually used in the context of negative context or denial, so it is appropriate to replace the above-mentioned phrase with "indulge". "Licentious" is another new word, meaning "behaving in a way that is considered sexually immoral", and it appears in the form of noun. "So that", the leading word of the objective clause, can be replaced by "in order to do / that". After dealing with new words or phrases, students should think about semantic relations. Students here may have such a question: why do the modern people rack their brains and do everything possible to make themselves happy? After analyzing the possible reasons in the context and combining with the reality, we can see that the possible root is that people have to bear various pressures in the modern society. Therefore, the purpose of seeking happiness at all costs is to reduce pressure. When paraphrasing it, we can supplement the semantics appropriately. To sum up, the key step of paraphrasing is to understand the sentence structure, clarify the logic, replace the key words with simple words, and make necessary additions to the semantic information of the original text according to the context. Finally, the sentence pattern can be appropriately changed to make the paraphrased sentence more clear and complete.

Suggested Answer:

In order to have a little fun under the stress of modern life, people indulged themselves even more intensively in dangerous adventures and excessive sex, alcohol and drugs.

Example 2

The god of mirth is paying us back for all those years of thinking fun was everywhere by refusing to come to our party.

The analysis of sentence structure is still an important foundation: The main body of this sentence is "The god of mirth is paying us back", followed by an object clause led by "for thinking". The "for" here leads to reasons. The teacher should guide the students to figure out the logical subjects of "think fun was everywhere" and "use to come to our party", if not, they will be confused and cannot understand the meaning of the sentence. It is relatively simple to paraphrase "all those years" and "fun was everywhere", which can be done by replacement. "Pay back" means "to punish sb for making you or sb else suffer", which can be replaced by simple and well-known phrases when paraphrasing. The logic of this sentence is as follows: for a long time, modern people have a superficial misunderstanding that happiness is everywhere (the reason); the God of

Happiness does not come to our gatherings to punish and revenge us (the result). When paraphrasing "the God of Happiness's revenge on modern people", we can flexibly deal with it as "our party is not so happy because without the presence God of Happiness". There is no need to emphasize the action of "revenge". Sentence only with the result can express the meaning comprehensively. It can be seen that on the basis of understanding the grammatical structure of the sentence and clarifying the logic of the sentence, we can integrate the information contained in the sentence and express the paraphrased sentence smoothly, so as to achieve the purpose of rewriting.

Suggested Answer:

We have long assumed that fun was easy to have, but now we are paying a price for that shallow-mindedness, i.e., our party is hardly as much fun as it is intended to be.

Example 3

Children enter school as question marks and leave as periods.

The structure of this sentence is relatively simple. "Enter school" and "leave (school)" are connected with a coordinating conjunction, and then two "as" and two nouns are used as complements. The difficulty in paraphrasing this sentence is to understand the connotation of the two "question marks" and "periods" according to the context. Why do students enter school as a question mark and leave school as a period? The teacher can explain the meaning of words and guide students to understand the connotation. Question mark refers to the punctuation mark which is used in writing at the end of a question, while period is the mark used at the end of a sentence and in some abbreviations. "Question mark" means that students are full of questions, curiosity and thirst for knowledge; while "period" means the end, when students have nothing to say. Combined with the context, this sentence can be understood as: the curiosity and quest spirit of students when they enter school have disappeared when they leave school. Therefore, in paraphrasing it, students should add the meaning of these two punctuation marks, indicating that readers have fully understood the meaning of "question mark" and "period". Students do not have to stick to the simple sentence pattern of the original text, but can express the meaning with two parallel sentences, reflecting the contrast between entry and exit, and ensure that the sentence is easy to understand and conform to the grammar rules.

Suggested Answer:

Children enter school with lots of questions and curiosity, but when they leave school after years of formal education, they lose all the curiosity and exploring spirit.

Example 4

Being "advanced" has its own pitfalls---among them complacency and pushing of forcing.

The first step of paraphrasing is still to identify the sentence structure. The sentence has a gerund as subject, and then subject + verb + object (Being "advanced" has its own pitfalls), followed by dash connecting preposition + pronoun + noun / gerund. The prominent feature of the component after the dash (among them complacency and pushing of forcing) is that there is no verb, indicating that it is not a complete sentence; from the preposition front, we can see that this is an independent nominative form of noun + preposition, which is written in inversion. "Complexity", "pushing" and "forcing" after the dash are all the explanation of "pitfalls". After understanding the sentence structure, we need to deal with the key words. Pitfall means a danger or difficulty, especially one that is hidden or not obvious at first. But the word here does not mean the potential danger in the environment, but refers to the mistakes that advanced learners are prone to make. Complacency refers to a feeling of satisfaction with yourself or with a situation, so that you do not think any change is necessary. The semantics of push and force overlap: push means to put pressure on sb and make them angry or upset, and force is to make sb do sth that they do not want to do. Looking at the meanings of the two nouns in the absolute construction, we can see that "pride", "complacency" and "coercion", "pressure" are actually the

two extremes that advanced learners tend to take in the learning process. Therefore, students can appropriately use the comparative words in paraphrasing. In addition, students can change the independent structure of the original sentence into a complete one, which make it expressed more clearly and completely.

Suggested Answer:

“Advanced” learners are likely to make some mistakes, for example, they may become excessively satisfied with their progress or on the contrary, put too much pressure on themselves to achieve further progress.

7. Conclusion

From the above examples, we can see that the key to paraphrasing is to analyze the syntactic structure. If students do not master the basic grammar, it will be difficult for them to paraphrase. The second is to analyze the meaning of key words. The paraphrasing of new words or phrases is not only limited to the use of synonyms to replace or explain, but also to consider the context in which words are presented and to understand the meaning of words. However, students should pay attention to the fact that if the words in the original sentence are concise and clear enough, especially when it is unnecessary to paraphrase after careful analysis, there is no need to replace or explain. In other words, it is not necessary to replace every word in the original sentence in any circumstances, because the principle of paraphrasing is to simplify the complex rather than to complicate the simple things. If so, it will increase the difficulty of understanding, which is contrary to the original intention of paraphrasing. The paraphrasing of any complex sentence should be considered according to the specific context. In certain circumstances, readers can add semantic information appropriately to make the paraphrased sentences more complete and accurate. What's more, the readers should carefully understand the logic implied in the original sentence. In organizing the language, the structure of the sentence can be appropriately adjusted, and the language information can be naturally and flexibly integrated together, so as to work out a simple expression that conforms to the grammatical norms and conforms to the original text as much as possible. Paraphrasing has high flexibility in practical operation, which is the difficulty of language teaching. To paraphrase complex sentences, teachers need to gradually explore suitable methods in teaching practice. It should be noted that the methods depend on specific cases, which can not be generalized. For students, they need to read more, lay a solid foundation of grammar, look up dictionaries frequently, accumulate vocabulary, pay attention to contextual factors, and make efforts from various aspects so as to improve their English proficiency.

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Biography

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