

## **Origami and Paraphrasing in EFL: Implications of Grammar Theory**

Deborah Foreman-Takano  
Doshisha University, Kyoto

Paraphrasing is a linguistically complex skill, but major linguistic theories have not dealt with it in any direct way. The Meaning-Text theory of grammar (MTT) is one, however, which examines and describes language on the basis of semantics. It is used primarily in connection with studies in computational linguistics –machine translation.

This paper examines preliminary forays into the teaching of communication strategies in EFL classes, loosely based on semantic/lexical analysis associated with MTT. This exercise began as an attempt to systematize the teaching of the paraphrasing skill to low-to-intermediate-level nonnative speakers at a Japanese university.

Essential to successful paraphrasing of both spoken and written language is a clear understanding of the situational context in which it is used. Origami provides a context that is (1) complete unto itself: it is a visible, tangible item that can be dealt with in myriad ways toward various ends; (2) a concrete item to anchor communication connected with abstract elements; (3) a concrete item that nevertheless can itself be used as an abstract.

Furthermore, successful communication activities involving origami depend significantly for success on the serious and careful attention to the communication partner(s). Thus paraphrasing is more likely than not to be required in many cases, and a thorough knowledge of the origami used in the exercise provides a basis for the paraphrase, limits the options that are applicable, and makes grammar/syntax difficulties less likely, allowing greater probability of success.