

The Role of QuillBot in Enhancing EFL Students' English Writing Skills

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.17369258

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received : 15-08-2025

Accepted : 15-09-2025

Available online : 16-10-2025

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Citation: Abu Diak, R. F. A., & Bsharat, T. R. K. (2025). The Role of QuillBot in Enhancing EFL Students' English Writing Skills. *IKR Journal of Education and Literature (IKRJEL)*, 1(2), 63-68.



ABSTRACT

Original research paper

This study aims to investigate the perspectives of EFL learners on using QuillBot as an AI-based writing tool to support their writing at Arab American University. Additionally, this study seeks to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this tool, as well as its effective role in enhancing students' English writing skills. To accomplish this, the study adopted the qualitative approach. The researcher conducted separate interviews with seven students from the department of English at Arab American University. These interviews consisted of four open-ended questions to elicit thorough responses. The researcher used the thematic approach to analyze the gathered data. The findings revealed an overall positive tendency among students to use QuillBot when writing academic papers.

Furthermore, the results highlighted the positive effect of this tool in developing learners' writing skills, on the one hand, and its role in reinforcing learners' self-confidence, on the other hand. However, the study did not explore the broader influence of QuillBot on motivation or critical thinking, nor did it compare QuillBot with other AI paraphrasing tools. Future research is recommended to investigate the long-term effects of AI integration in language learning and to conduct comparative studies to understand these effects better.

Keywords: Writing skills, QuillBot, EFL students, Grammar, Academic Integrity.

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Introduction

The world is undergoing a transformative informational revolution. Since English is regarded as the language of innovation and technology, mastering its four fundamental skills has become indispensable, especially in the field of academic writing. In both professional and educational settings, the capacity to write in English is of paramount importance. In the professional world, effective writing facilitates formal communication and the publishing of significant documents, while in the academic field, these skills are necessary to create scholarly works (Nugroho et al., 2025).

Writing skills describe an individual's capabilities to express

thoughts and specific details in written English. Writers with a strong writing background can clearly and concisely communicate their thoughts. In the context of academic writing, English writing abilities encompass the ability to craft texts that are coherent, organized, and adhere to linguistic standards. Proper grammar, the capacity to systematically build arguments, and the right choice of words are all essential components of academic writing. Researchers frequently acknowledge the importance of proficient English writing in producing high-quality scientific output. All in all, Academic writing demands the ability to properly communicate concepts, arrange paragraphs, and formulate strong sentences (Hidayat et al., 2024).

However, EFL students may face different obstacles in writing their research papers, such as difficulties with rearranging their thoughts, which can make it challenging for them to reflect on their ideas effectively. Furthermore, they struggle with grammar and sentence structure. Weak understanding of grammar rules can lead to errors in sentence construction and entire paragraphs. Other barriers include limited proficiency in vocabulary, which prevents learners from expressing their ideas effectively in English. This leads to the lack of constructive feedback and supporting resources.

Efficient learning strategies and technological support are necessary to address these challenges, facilitate the writing process, and improve writing competence and quality. The emergence of digital technology in the modern educational era has fundamentally transformed traditional teaching and learning techniques, equipping instructors and students with advanced tools for enriching the educational process. In this era of modern technology, several tools are available to aid in the language learning process. According to Xuyen (2023), numerous technology-driven learning strategies can support both EFL learners and instructors in learning and teaching English. One such tool is QuillBot, an online tool that can rebuild English sentences and modify the entire format of a paragraph without altering the primary meaning, utilizing artificial intelligence. By employing AI technology, this tool helps users effectively rewrite and edit texts. This tool provides users with suggestions and feedback on their writing to help them enhance their skills. Several studies have demonstrated the benefits and drawbacks of QuillBot, although precise information on its use in paraphrasing has not yet been thoroughly documented in internationally recognized journals.

Statement of the Problem

Having strong writing skills is considered crucial to academic success. Researchers and scholars face several difficulties when paraphrasing ideas in their research papers. Writing is actually not simple; it is difficult even for university English language learners. Lack of vocabulary is the biggest problem that EFL learners may face, whether in writing or speaking. Most EFL learners complain that they are incapable of expressing their ideas effectively because of their limited proficiency in English. As a result, their writing may sound underdeveloped and shallow. Additionally, EFL learners have difficulties with sentence structure and grammar. Inadequate knowledge of grammar rules can lead to errors in sentence construction and result in entire paragraphs that are flawed. This can render their writing incoherent and difficult for readers to grasp (Sarwat et al., 2021). Moreover, English language learners often struggle to successfully reflect on their ideas and write them rationally in academic articles, as they usually find it difficult to rearrange their thoughts. Consequently, they resort to using online paraphrasing tools,

such as Quillbot, Grammarly, and Wordtune, to simplify their writing process.

Study Objectives

This study aims to investigate EFL students' viewpoints on using QuillBot as a paraphrasing tool while writing their academic papers at Arab American University. Furthermore, it seeks to examine the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing this tool when writing. Additionally, the study aims to assist English language instructors in modernizing their teaching methods by incorporating AI-based educational resources into their courses, which can be effectively utilized during lectures, such as online paraphrasing tools.

Questions of the Study

The current study endeavors to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL students' viewpoints about using paraphrasing tools?
2. What are the advantages of using QuillBot in writing academic articles?
3. What are the disadvantages of using QuillBot in writing academic articles?

Significance of the Study

Some universities do not allocate specific time or funds for training their instructors on integrating artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, such as paraphrasing tools, into their curricula and subsequently training their students to utilize these tools effectively. This study provides a thorough examination of EFL students' viewpoints on using QuillBot as a paraphrasing tool in writing academic articles at Arab American University. Also, it examines the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing this tool while writing. The study findings are expected to help EFL learners develop their writing capabilities and advance their English language skills in general, particularly by using QuillBot for paraphrasing complex texts while writing.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted to illustrate the role of paraphrasing tools in improving learners' writing skills, provide EFL learners with proper practices while using these tools when writing their research papers, and demonstrate the drawbacks of using these tools that may result in papers being rejected. In general, paraphrasing tools can address a wide range of academic writing obstacles, including respecting the original text by retaining the same information, identifying parts of speech, accurately paraphrasing the essence of the text, writing proper syntax, and controlling punctuation. Undoubtedly, paraphrasing tools, like other techniques, have merits and demerits.

As technology continues to evolve, numerous tools and applications can be utilized to aid teaching and learning activities, such as paraphrasing in writing tasks. Many studies have confirmed that the use of technology in teaching writing has helped instructors improve their students' writing performance, including those by Thohir et al. (2024), Bui and Vu (2023), Faisal and Sukmaningrum (2023), and Malvado et al. (2022). According to numerous studies, QuillBot is an online application that can be used to summarize lengthy statements, rephrase sentences, and check for plagiarism and grammar. It is considered one of the human inventions in the field of digital technology. It has been recognized that in the current era of digitalization and globalization, technology has significantly enhanced the teaching and learning process, encompassing both learning English as a foreign language and English language teaching (Sulistyaningrum, 2021; Fitria, 2021; Nurmayanti & Suryadi, 2023). Consequently, QuillBot is effective in helping students develop their writing skills and overcome challenges related to paraphrasing. Additionally, it has come to light that utilizing ChatGPT may significantly enhance learners' writing capabilities, particularly their ability to write news texts (Mukhlis, 2024).

Integrating technology into English language teaching has been a topic of interest for many researchers. However, there have been few studies on QuillBot's use and none that have specifically examined how well university students learn to paraphrase using QuillBot as an automatic paraphraser alongside manual paraphrasing. Fitria (2021) reviewed the QuillBot as an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool system that assists students in rewriting and paraphrasing English writing. The researcher further stated that when learners lack the motivation to paraphrase English writing manually, this tool may serve as an alternative for them, providing a solution. However, EFL students who possess a strong vocabulary and a solid grasp of English grammar will be more capable of using online or manual paraphrasing. According to Kurniati and Fithriani's (2022) study on students' perceptions of using QuillBot, postgraduate students generally react positively to using QuillBot to enhance the quality of their writing. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that using QuillBot offers three benefits: assisting learners in strengthening their language skills, reinforcing students' positive attitudes toward writing and providing a range of easy-to-use writing tools. This study suggests that AI-powered writing tools, such as QuillBot, significantly enhance students' ability to produce high-quality writing, particularly in academic contexts.

Kharbach (2023) confirmed in research that QuillBot is a valuable tool for students to use when paraphrasing, as it enables them to find more effective ways to rewrite or paraphrase, enhances the quality of their own writing, and facilitates clear and meaningful communication of textual material. Additionally, Muslem et al. (2022) offered the potential of teaching both automated and manual

summarizing to the students. The researcher stated that because human translation or summarization is a time-consuming procedure, automation is required, and it can be achieved by utilizing artificial intelligence technology.

However, like other applications, the auto-text summarization app has certain drawbacks, so students need to quickly check their self-evaluation for summarizing skills, which can be effectively implemented if they have been introduced to and trained on manual summarizing. In light of the description above, this was an intriguing problem for introducing and training students on how to manually paraphrase before using QuillBot, an automatic paraphraser, in paraphrasing activities. In light of this, the present study sought to respond to the following two research questions:

- 1) How effective is the integration of a manual and an automatic paraphraser?
- 2) What do students think about using QuillBot as a paraphraser?

Research Method

Study Design

This research employed a qualitative method to investigate EFL students' perceptions of using QuillBot in their academic papers, as well as to highlight its advantages and disadvantages. This research was conducted on active EFL learners at Arab American University. The data were gathered through separate interviews conducted with seven students from the Department of English at Arab American University, representing different academic levels. These interviews included four open-ended questions to obtain thorough responses and gain rich qualitative data. The qualitative approach opens the door for more in-depth research, providing a valuable interpretation of students' opinions, attitudes, and their propensity to use paraphrasing tools.

Paraphrasing tools serve as supportive instruments for EFL students. They assist them in rewriting complex texts, helping them avoid copying the original material, which reduces the likelihood of inadvertent plagiarism. For this reason, the present study adopted the qualitative approach.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of seven male and female EFL students studying English language and literature at the Department of English at Arab American University, representing different academic levels. The current study employed a qualitative method to examine and compare students' viewpoints on their use of QuillBot.

Instruments of the Study

To achieve the primary objectives of this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach. The researcher

conducted interviews with seven students from the Department of English at Arab American University, representing different academic levels. Some interviews were conducted face-to-face on the campus of the Arab American University. In contrast, others were conducted using a variety of digital communication tools, including Zoom, WhatsApp, Messenger, and voice recordings. This approach enabled a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of EFL students' views on using QuillBot as a paraphrasing tool while writing their academic papers and reports.

Instrument Validity

To validate the interview questions, they were evaluated by experts in the fields of TEFL and English language and literature at Al-Quds Open University (QOU) and An-Najah National University. Following the validation of the interview questions, the researcher reviewed and took into account the comments, including the omission of three questions and modifications proposed for other questions.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to investigate EFL students' opinions on using QuillBot in their academic writing at Arab American University. To accomplish this goal, the researcher employed thematic analysis (TA) as a method to investigate, identify, and illuminate themes or patterns within specific data. The findings outlined below align with the study questions and hypotheses.

To collect the qualitative data, the researcher interviewed seven male and female students majoring in Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and English Language and Literature at Arab American University. For data analysis, the researcher employed the thematic analysis approach. According to Braun & Clark (2021), the thematic analysis approach is a method used for examining, identifying, and illustrating patterns or themes of specific data. TA focuses on particular themes and relies on thoroughly organizing and summarizing qualitative data, as well as integrating, evaluating, and analyzing various aspects of the study to create meaningful connections and gain a deeper understanding. While collecting answers from 7 students to each question, the researcher noticed similar answers or, in some cases, repeated ones for the same question. This is because some of them shared similar points of view, having gone through similar experiences.

Results Related to the First Study Question?

What are EFL students' viewpoints about using paraphrasing tools?

To answer this question, the researcher investigated EFL students' perceptions at Arab American University about

using QuillBot in their academic writing by asking them the question:

"Have you ever utilized paraphrasing tools? If your answer is 'yes,' which ones did you use? What are your favorites, and why?"

The majority of students answered "Yes". According to their answers, their responses indicate that they all use QuillBot,, and a few of them use other tools such as Grammarly, Paraphrase Online, and SpinBot. QuillBot is free and user-friendly, which is why most students prefer to use it. Further, it serves well in rephrasing the sentences while preserving the same meaning, it provides accurate information and a variety of paraphrasing options, helps enhance the clarity and fluency of writing, and offers different modes as shown in the excerpt: "I favor QuillBot because it provides a variety of rewriting modes, such as "Standard," "Fluency," and "Creative," which help me select the best version depending on the task" (Int.St5).

Another student claimed employing paraphrasing tools aided them in saving time, as evidenced in the excerpt: "Yes, I have utilized paraphrasing tools like QuillBot, Grammarly, and Paraphrase Online. I preferred QuillBot because it offers more accurate and natural information and saves time and effort compared to others." (Int.St3).

Results Related to the Second Study Question

What are the advantages of using QuillBot in writing academic articles?

To answer this question, the researcher investigated EFL students' perceptions at Arab American University about the advantages of using QuillBot in academic articles by asking them the questions:

"What are the primary motivations for using paraphrasing tools?"

"How can employing paraphrasing tools improve your writing skills?"

The researcher adopted the thematic analysis (TA) method to organize and summarize the findings, identifying the primary themes: avoiding plagiarism, improving vocabulary, saving time and effort, and enhancing writing clarity and structure.

Many students reported that using paraphrasing tools helped them successfully manage their academic responsibilities. Hence, by using these paraphrasing tools effectively, they can manage their time more efficiently. They frequently utilize them to save time while editing and revising sections of their written works, as stated by student 2 in the excerpt: "They help me save time when I'm revising or editing portions of my assignments" (Int. St2).

Other students emphasized the importance of using paraphrasing tools when writing scientific papers, as they

provide students with various ways to present their ideas, enabling them to craft more effective sentences and develop coherent paragraphs. Consequently, students will actively work to improve their writing skills. This point of view is shown in the excerpt: "It highly aids to express ideas in various ways and write better sentence structures" (Int. St1).

Numerous students who participated in this study reported that using paraphrasing tools enhanced their writing capabilities and streamlined the writing process. They demonstrated the benefits of these tools in writing proficient research papers and acknowledged their satisfaction with them. For example, student 6 claimed that paraphrasing tools simplify complex sentences and introduce clear concepts, as stated in the excerpt: "They help rephrase difficult sentences and improve clarity". (Int. St6).

Results Related to the Third Study Question

What are the disadvantages of using QuillBot in writing academic articles?

To answer this question, the researcher investigated EFL students' perceptions at Arab American University about the disadvantages of using QuillBot in academic articles by asking them the question:

"What are your concerns about using paraphrasing tools?"

The researcher adopted the thematic analysis (TA) method to organize and summarize the findings, identifying primary themes that included over-reliance and weakening of writing skills, ethical concerns and academic Integrity, and loss of original meaning and unnatural output.

Since English is the most widely used language in the world, students who are not proficient in this language will not succeed in any field they aspire to pursue. Most students contended that relying too heavily on paraphrasing tools restricts critical thinking and ultimately reduces creativity. For instance, student (4) argued that the regular use of paraphrasing tools would impede students' ability to think creatively while completing their assignments and academic papers, thereby hindering their creative thinking. They won't effectively acquire the second language as stated in this excerpt: If students rely too much on them, this will hamper creativity and critical thinking. (Int.St 4).

Another student reported that paraphrasing tools can be considered cheating if not utilized responsibly. Learners should exercise caution while using these tools to avoid plagiarism, as reported by student (2) in the excerpt: "This tool is sometimes viewed as unethical. If you take information that other researchers have found, and write it in your own words, you must write a proper citation". (Int.St 2).

Some responses highlighted how paraphrasing tools can often result in strange phrases or change intended meanings, which impact the clarity of writing. Sometimes, these tools are unable to fully understand the meaning of the text as a person

can. As a result, they may generate a new version that significantly differs from the original, conveying entirely different ideas, especially when altering sentence structure. Thus, the likelihood of generating inaccurate or grammatically incorrect sentences increases as reported by student (1), student (5), and student (6) in the following excerpts:

"Sentence structure or grammar may occasionally sound unnatural." (Int. St 1)

"They sometimes generate grammatically incorrect sentences." (Int. St 5)

"The tools may alter the original meaning of the sentence or may make the language sound too formal." (Int. St 6)

The interview consisted of four questions that examined EFL students' perceptions of using QuillBot in writing their academic papers at Arab American University. The researcher concluded that the responses in the interviews, conducted with students, affirmed the practicality of QuillBot as a vital source of support and encouragement that can promote a culture of learning writing skills without negating the primary role of teachers in the classroom.

Conclusion

Writing proficiency is essential to develop. When writing articles and academic assignments, such as essays, reports, research projects, theses, and other types of academic papers, EFL students should focus on refining their academic writing skills, which are essential to the English language. However, students face numerous obstacles while writing. So, they resort to using paraphrasing tools as aids to assist them in their writing. According to the study, the majority of students use QuillBot throughout their writing journey because of its ease and accuracy. In addition to being simple to use and access, QuillBot helps students produce scientific articles, particularly those who struggle with the English language. Students who have challenging assignments to complete can utilize these tools to increase their confidence.

Recommendations

The study recommends investigating the long-term effects of AI integration in language learning and conducting comparative studies on the use of QuillBot compared to other paraphrasing tools. The study also recommended conducting further studies to investigate the perspectives of students from different majors, such as medicine, engineering, and accounting, beyond English language and literature, on the use of QuillBot in their academic papers. Additionally, it suggested examining the effectiveness of QuillBot in rephrasing phrases related to these majors. Finally, the present study recommends that developers of paraphrasing tools design new versions tailored explicitly for academic learning contexts and continually update them.

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