Using the Online Paraphrasing Tool Quillbot to Assist Students in Paraphrasing the Source Information: English-majored Students' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Paraphrasing plays a crucial role in academic writing as it aids writers in avoiding plagiarism. However, for EFL learners, especially those who are not experienced in the academic world, paraphrasing is a challenging skill. As a solution, they rely on online paraphrasing tools such as paraphrasing-tool.com, Quillbot.com, prepotseo.com or spinbot.com for help. These tools have been proved by several studies to be beneficial for students to overcome the difficulties in academic writing in general and paraphrasing skills in particular. However, little is known about how EFL learners perceive these online paraphrasing tools as assistants in writing academically. Therefore, this quantitative study is conducted with the aim to shed light on the perceptions of students on using the online paraphrasing tool Quillbot to paraphrase source information. The sample comprises 220 second-year students who are studying English Linguistics at a public university in Vietnam. Data, which is collected through a questionnaire, is analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25. Findings indicate that participants hold a favourable attitude towards Quillbot and this online paraphrasing tool does affect their attitude toward paraphrasing source text as well as their language development.

Keywords: Paraphrasing, Online paraphrasing tools, Quillbot

1   Introduction

It is commonly believed that writing, especially academic writing, is a challenging skill for EFL students (Fitria, 2022; Hieu, Huy, & Hang, 2022; Na & Mai, 2017). According to Na and Mai (2017), those who want to master this skill must possess a solid foundation of knowledge on how to structure a paragraph or essay as well as a basic understanding of how to write in English. Paraphrasing skill is vital in academic writing thanks to the capacity to help students write effectively and logically link concepts in sentences, paragraphs, or essays. In addition, this ability enables EFL learners to avoid plagiarism (Fitria, 2022; Rakhmanina & Serasi, 2022). As stated by Fitria (2022), EFL students apply different methods to paraphrase, including synonyms, reordering the words in a sentence, reforming words, and changing active sentences to passive ones and vice versa. However, according to Hieu et al (2022), the limited lexical resources and grammatical range and accuracy make it challenging for students to perfect this skill.

In the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry (HUFI), English-majored students face plenty of difficulties while writing academic English, especially writing a summary. During Integrated Skills 1, a compulsory course taught at HUFI, English-majored students are required to write a summary in which they have to synthesize the information from two sources of information: an academic essay and a lecture. One important criterion that they have to meet is to paraphrase the source text. As a lecturer in charge of teaching this course, the researcher recognizes that students struggle and usually fail to rephrase the source information without changing its original meaning. To overcome this challenge, many of them resort to online paraphrasing tools for assistance, especially Quillbot.

Quillbot is one of the most popular free online paraphrasing tools, which utilizes Artificial Intelligence (AI) to suggest paraphrases. Many researchers like Chui (2022), Fitria (2021), Kurniati & Fithriani (2022), Huong

(2022) and Junaidi et al. (2022) believe that Quillbot can be beneficial to students in terms of avoiding plagiarism, paraphrasing, and auto-correcting writing.

There are a significant number of studies investigating how online paraphrasing tools assist in EFL writing. However, little is known about the perceptions of EFL learners in general and Vietnamese EFL students in particular toward Quillbot, especially its effects on paraphrasing ability. Therefore, this study is conducted to shed light on how English-majored students at a public university in Vietnam perceive the utilization of Quillbot in paraphrasing the source information. This paper begins by examining existing research on the topic of paraphrasing tools, Quillbot, and its impact on the writing of EFL learners, followed by a discussion of the technique used to collect data for the study. The research findings and discussion are then presented in connection to relevant studies on Quillbot and EFL learners' paraphrasing skills. The research closes with some implications for the prospective usage of Quillbot in source information paraphrase.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Paraphrasing tools

Bin and Michael (2019) define paraphrasing tools as programs that enable users to change the words in a piece of writing without affecting its original meaning. Fitria (2022) expands this definition by stating that the purpose of paraphrasing tools is to substitute words, phrases, sentences, and even entire paragraphs with alternate versions of the material without affecting the general sense of the text.

Several studies conducted by Nurul and Siti (2021), Kurniati and Fithriani (2022), Ariyanti and Anam (2021) and Khabib (2022) show that online paraphrasing tools such as paraphrasing-tool.com, Quillbot.com, prepotseo.com or spinbot.com, can help mitigate students' difficulties in academic writing.

One of the most important benefits of online paraphrasing tools stated in previous studies is that they can assist students in paraphrasing proper discourse markers, changing word forms, choosing proper tenses of verbs, rewriting the source text into a paraphrase with different writing styles, and rewording vocabulary from the source text (Fitria, 2022; Fitria, 2021; Nurul & Siti, 2021; Ariyanti & Anam, 2021).

2.2   Quillbot

Quillbot is an online paraphrasing application that uses cutting-edge artificial intelligence to paraphrase any piece of material. The paraphraser in Quillbot changes the original sentences, enabling authors to effortlessly revise and rework the source information. The use of Quillbot in academic writing has received attention from several researchers. Several studies on Quillbot's effects on academic writing show that this online tool may help students in a variety of ways, including summarizing lengthy phrases, avoiding plagiarism, and refining language to make it clearer and appear professional (Fitria, 2021; Fitria, 2022; Rakhmanina & Serasi, 2022; Nurul & Siti, 2021; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022). Additionally, according to Fitria (2022), Quillbot is a time-saving tool which can help find appropriate synonyms and enhance the clarity of the text. Thanks to its richness of vocabulary and ease of use, Quillbot is popular among millions of users, including students, authors, bloggers, and businesspeople worldwide.

Regarding the perceptions of students in general and EFL learners in particular on the use of Quillbot in academic writing, a limited number of studies have been conducted. When investigating the perceptions of post-graduate students in Indonesia, Kurniati and Fithriani (2022) find out that students consider Quillbot as an effective online tool to assist them with academic research writing. In Vietnam, the study conducted by Hieu et al (2022) also states that Vietnamese EFL learners have positive feedback on Quillbot's effect on their writing performance.

Through the review of previous studies on Quillbot, it is clear that Quillbot is of great use in helping students overcome the challenges in academic writing. However, little is known about how EFL learners,

especially English-majored students perceive the use of online paraphrasing tools in paraphrasing the source information; therefore, this study is conducted to find out the answers to the following research question:

- *To what extent do English-majored students perceive the use of Quillbot in paraphrasing source information?*

3 Methodology

The participants in this study are second-year students who major in English Linguistics at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, a public university in Vietnam. All participants have finished the Integrated Skills 1 course, which is a mandatory course for all English-majored students. The course focuses on developing three fundamental English skills: reading, listening, and writing. During the course, students read a passage on an academic topic, listen to a lecture related to the topic of the passage, and then write a summary to explain the connection between two sources. While writing the summary, they are required to paraphrase the information from both sources of information.

The research data is collected through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire of 17 questions which is developed after the researcher reviews the instruments utilized in previous studies by Hieu et al (2022) and Kurniati and Fithriani (2022). Some items are modified and others are added to make them suitable and relevant to the participants of this study. The questionnaire aims to investigate students' perceptions of the use of Quillbot in paraphrasing the source text when writing an integrated summary. The participants show their level of agreement with a value from 1 to 5, accordingly "*strongly disagree*", "*disagree*", "*neither agree nor disagree*", "*agree*" and "*strongly agree*".

A Preliminary Questionnaire, which is used to identify whether the students have experience using Quillbot, is distributed to all second-year students using Google Forms after they finish the Integrated Skills 1 Course. After receiving the data from the preliminary questionnaire, the researcher sent the second questionnaire to only those who did use Quillbot. The second questionnaire consists of two parts: the background information of the participants and their perceptions of Quillbot utilization.

The data collected through the second questionnaire is then analyzed using the IBM SPSS version 25 to calculate descriptive statistics. Table 1 demonstrates the reliability statistics of the second questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha result at $\alpha = 0.901$ justifies the reliability of this questionnaire.

Table 1: *Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire*

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.901	.909	17

4 Results and Discussion

The results of the Preliminary Questionnaire show that 76.7% of the second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages have used Quillbot to assist them in paraphrasing the information from the source text and lecture. 23.3% of the students who have not used this online paraphrasing tool are excluded from the study.

4.1 Respondents' background information

The result of the second questionnaire shows that the majority of respondents are female students at 80%. This ratio is relevant to the female-male student ratio in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFI.

Figure 1 below shows the information in terms of the frequency of using Quillbot by the students who participate in the research. It is clear that half of the respondents take advantage of Quillbot on a frequent basis to assist them in paraphrasing the source information when they write a summary.
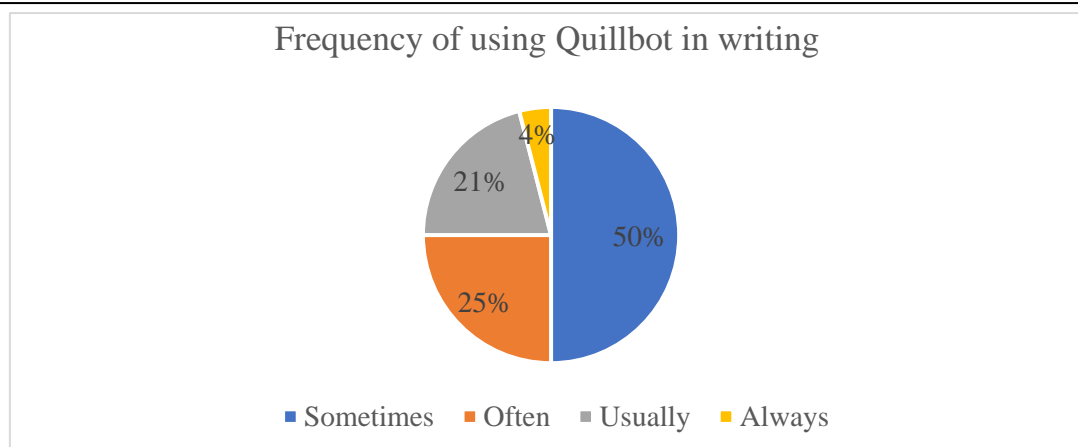
Figure 1: *The frequency of using Quillbot*

4.2 Students' Perception of Quillbot Utilization

4.2.1 Why do students use Quillbot?

Table 2 below shows the participant's responses to the reasons why they use Quillbot in paraphrasing the source information. It can be seen that students highly value Quillbot's availability, ease of use, and free-of-charge, with 86.6%, 85.4%, and 85.4% respectively among the respondents agreeing. In addition, a large proportion of the respondents choose to use Quillbot because it is time-saving (81.6%), and over two-thirds of them think that this online paraphrasing tool has various features that can assist them in writing.

Table 2: *Reasons for using Quillbot in paraphrasing*

	Items	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Mean	STD
1	Quillbot has various features that help me in paraphrasing.	8.0	23.4	68.6	*3.72*	0.874
2	I find it easy to use Quillbot to paraphrase the source text.	6.5	18.0	85.4	*4.08*	0.924
3	I can get access to Quillbot easily to paraphrase the source text.	1.4	11.7	86.9	*4.16*	0.710
4	I do not have to pay any fee to use Quillbot.	2.2	12.4	85.4	*4.13*	0.705
5	Quillbot allows me to save time when paraphrasing the source text.	2.2	16.1	81.8	*4.07*	0.724
					4.03	0.787

4.2.2 Positive effects of Quillbot utilization

Table 3 below illustrates the respondents' evaluation of Quillbot's assistance in paraphrasing source information. According to the statistics presented in the table, the mean of the cluster is 3.96, which is far from 1 and close to 5. This clearly shows that the participants tend to agree that Quillbot has a positive effect on their paraphrasing skills.

With regard to the effect of using Quillbot on the attitude toward paraphrasing the source information, 81.8% of the respondents tend to agree that Quillbot helps reduce their anxiety while paraphrasing the

information from both the reading passage and the lecture. They also share the same view that thanks to the use of Quillbot, they gain confidence in paraphrasing the source information.

Table 3: *Quillbot's positive effects*

		Items	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Mean	STD
Quillbot enhances my positive attitude towards paraphrasing the source information.						*3.91*	*0.872*
6		Quillbot helps reduce my anxiety while paraphrasing the source information.	6.5	11.7	81.8	*3.95*	0.869
7		Quillbot boosts my confidence in paraphrasing the source information.	8.8	11.7	79.6	*3.88*	0.875
Quillbot encourages my language development						*3.97*	*0.875*
8		I can widen my knowledge of synonyms while using Quillbot.	4.4	8.8	86.8	*4.08*	0.805
9		Quillbot allows me to use vocabulary more flexibly.	4.4	9.5	86.1	*4.07*	0.806
10		Quillbot allows me to enhance English grammar.	6.5	13.9	79.6	*3.91*	0.925
11		Quillbot allows me to sharpen my sentence structure.	6.5	13.1	80.4	*3.93*	0.951
12		Quillbot allows me to use cohesive devices more flexibly.	5.1	18.2	76.6	*3.88*	0.859
13		Quillbot allows me to make my writing more coherent.	6.5	10.2	83.3	*3.96*	0.909
Overall mean of the cluster						*3.96*	

In relation to the effect of Quillbot on their language development, the participants tend to agree (the entire mean is 3.97) Quillbot utilization has a positive impact on their language development. As indicated in Table 3, Question 8 (M = 4.08, SD = 0.805) and Question 9 (M = 4.07, SD = 0.806) gain slightly higher mean scores than the other statements about language development. This justifies the perceptions of Quillbot's effects on vocabulary sources and vocabulary uses are at the highest level, followed by grammar and cohesion, both with means of 3.92.

4.2.3 Quillbot's negative impacts

Table 4 demonstrates Quillbot's negative impacts as perceived by the second-year students. Both Questions 14 and 15 gain lower mean scores than the other questions in the questionnaire (M = 2.64 and 2.79 respectively). This indicates students do not think that Quillbot affects them negatively.

Table 4: *Quillbot's negative impacts*

	Items	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Mean	STD
14	Quillbot makes me lazy to think while paraphrasing.	56.9	9.5	33.6	*2.64*	1.13
15	I become more dependent on Quillbot to paraphrase the source text.	46.7	15.3	38.0	*2.79*	1.16
Overall					*2.71*	*1.14*

4.2.4 Intentions to use Quillbot

Table 5 shows the respondents' intentions to use Quillbot in the future. It is clear from the table that the vast majority of students have the intention to continue using Quillbot as an assistant in their writing. In addition, they would like to recommend this tool to their classmates (81.8%).

Table 5: *Intentions to use Quillbot*

	Items	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Mean	STD
16	I will continue using Quillbot to assist my paraphrasing skills.	6.6	13.1	80.3	3.90	0.825
17	I will recommend Quillbot to my classmates so that they can use it for paraphrasing.	8.8	9.5	81.8	3.98	0.958
Overall					*3.94*	*0.891*

5 Conclusion

From the results presented in the Findings and Discussions section, it is clear that English-majored students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFI usually use Quillbot to assist with their paraphrasing tasks. Additionally, they hold a positive view of Quillbot's impacts on their English language development, especially on their lexical sources and uses. Therefore, they tend to rely more on Quillbot in writing summaries in the future. This result is in line with the previous studies of Hieu et al (2022) and Kurniati & Fithriani (2022). Furthermore, this study reveals that from the viewpoint of EFL learners, using Quillbot has positive effects on reducing their anxiety and boosting their confidence in paraphrasing skills, which is a new finding. In short, this finding highlights the potential of Quillbot as a useful tool for EFL learners to improve their writing abilities and overcome their psychological barriers.

From the findings of this study, it is suggested that EFL teachers, especially those teaching academic writing skills should consider the use of Quillbot in teaching their students how to paraphrase as well as to improve students' attitudes towards paraphrasing skills. Moreover, the study highlights the potential benefits of incorporating technology in language teaching and learning. It also emphasizes the importance of developing students' paraphrasing skills, which are crucial for academic writing and communication.

6   Declarations

6.1 Study Limitations

This study is still limited to the extent that it just investigates the perceptions of students. To thoroughly understand the impacts of Quillbot on students' paraphrasing skills, further research should be conducted and teachers' perceptions should also be included. Including teachers' perceptions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Quillbot in improving students' paraphrasing skills. Additionally, future studies could also explore the long-term effects of using Quillbot on students' writing abilities.

6.2 Acknowledgements

6.3 Publisher's Note

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