

## **Students' Lived Experience in Utilizing Quillbot As An Online Paraphrasing Tool In Academic Writing**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate students' lived experiences in using Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool in academic writing. Different from previous studies that explored the benefits of Quillbot, 6 undergraduate students from Sanata Dharma University were invited in this study to dig deeper into how they interact with Quillbot and how Quillbot affects their writing process. Qualitative transcendental phenomenology was used in this research and the instruments used were Questionnaire and in-dept interview. The results of this study showed that Quillbot was considered as a useful AI in students' writing process, but they also showed awareness not to rely heavily on AI to replace their own writing skills. The outcome of this study also provided more insight to the wider community who still consider AI to has a negative impact that actually AI can always be used in academic settings if students have boundaries and tricks in using AI.

**Keywords:** Quillbot, paraphrasing tool, academic writing, lived experiences, writing assistance

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the context of higher education, students are not only asked to compose non-academic writing but they will be asked to produce a piece of writing related to academic writing. Higher education students, need to have very logical reasoning which requires them to be able to produce good writing and correct grammar (Suharti & Sutikno, 2019). Students who seek to thrive in higher education must write academic assignments including research papers, essays, and reports, all of which require knowledge of particular academic writing patterns (Turlybekov & Berkimbayev, 2023). In contrast to writing a story, novel, or descriptive text, academic writing requires students to be able to produce more complex and systematic writing. Aldabbus & Almansouri (2022) claim that in higher education, students should be able to come up with concepts and construct their writing into logically interrelated paragraphs, research the subject, create a concise outline, decide what to put in the introduction, how to structure the main body and provide a compelling conclusion.

Due to these factors, some students, especially undergraduate students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) often encounter significant challenges in English academic writing (Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023; Xuyen, 2023; Zulfa et al., 2023). A previous study conducted by Kotamjani et al. (2018) which examined how challenging academic writing is seen by overseas students at Malaysian public universities, shows that the most challenging aspects of writing, in terms of language-related abilities were using relevant lexical phrases, using appropriate academic language and vocabulary, producing coherent paragraphs, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is one of the crucial aspects of academic writing considering that students have to quote someone's statements and write opinions. However, it seems

that paraphrasing is also a common difficulty faced by students in academic writing where English is not their native language (Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023). Many students still failed to properly paraphrase the English texts as we observed that the students' works nearly copied most of the sources (Sarair et al., 2019). Further, according to (Putra, 2018) although students have learned how to paraphrase, most of them still find it a difficulty. The lack of paraphrasing skills may be the point that causes a lot of students to be concerned about their paraphrasing results which may lead to unintentional plagiarism.

Nowadays, the concern caused by the lack of paraphrasing skills in academic writing can be addressed with the use of technology. With the proliferation of technology, the challenges in academic writing can be alleviated through its utilization (Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022). As students are now living in the digital era, they consistently seek and use technology as a way to tackle their problems in academic writing, especially in paraphrasing. Students are frequently referred to as "digital natives" because of their natural knowledge and comfort with technology (Zulfa et al., 2023). In previous research conducted by Hajimaghsoodi & Maftoon (2020), it is said that students who involve technology in their writing process show a positive effect on their writing achievement and improve their writing skills. Therefore, students who are known as "digital natives" show their interest in technology by using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English academic writing. There are also some recent attempts to support students in writing scientific papers using AI-based technologies (Schmohl et al., 2020). The use of an online paraphrasing tool as an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technology that assists students in paraphrasing is one example of the benefits of using AI in the academic field. Additionally, students can use online paraphrasing tools to improve their paraphrasing (Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023).

Quillbot has become an online paraphrasing tool that students often rely on to paraphrase and produce originality in their academic writing products. Previous research conducted by Kurniati & Fithriani (2022) showed that the majority of graduate students frequently utilize Quillbot, when compared to other digital tools such as Grammarly, Turnitin, and Mendeley, to help them with their academic writing assignments, among the many now-accessible digital resources. In addition, Fitria (2021) stated that Quillbot is an online tool that helps writers paraphrase their writing, prevent plagiarism, summarize lengthy sentences, and enhance their grammar for more clarity and a more polished appearance. Quillbot is a user-friendly online paraphrasing tool that can be accessed both for free or paid with features that make it easy for students to enhance their paraphrasing skills (Fitria, 2021; Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023). A previous study conducted by Kurniati & Fithriani (2022) showed that most students found Quillbot to be a useful digital tool for helping them with academic writing.

Nevertheless, with many studies showing that the use of AI such as Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool provides many advantages to students, people still believe that the utilization of AI in academic settings is unacceptable due to the possibility of AI replacing humans. The underlying reasons, as shown by logistic regression analyses, were a lack of knowledge about the AI technology associated with a fear of being replaced by AI, as well as a lack of regulatory policy (Roganović et al., 2023). More specifically, the dearth of research exploring students' lived experiences in using Quillbot in English academic writing has led to less investigation into how it might affect students' writing process at the undergraduate level. Thus, this study was meant to fill the existing empirical gap by examining undergraduate students' experiences

they have had and the actions they take while using Quillbot to improve the quality of their English academic writing. The result of this research aims to gain valuable insights into how students interact with Quillbot and how it influences their writing process. It also aims to broaden the perspectives of teachers, lecturers, instructors, and the wider community about the use of AI which is often considered taboo and harms students. Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool will be beneficial if students are taught to understand the limits of using AI in their writing process. Thus, this study seeks to address 2 research questions:

1. What are the students' lived experiences that they interpret after utilizing Quillbot in their academic writing?
2. What are students' attitudes after using Quillbot in their academic writing?

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research was intended to explore undergraduate students' lived experiences when utilizing Quillbot in academic writing. According to Manen (1990) to examine someone's lived experience, it is not enough to just ask them to recall the experience, but instead someone should also be asked to recall experiences in which essential aspects of their lived experience are evoked as a form of things that they interpreted. Therefore, to carry out this study, a qualitative phenomenological approach was employed. The phenomenological approach is the study of how individuals interpret their experiences and the outside world, build a worldview, and bring their experiences into consciousness (Patton, 2002). This phenomenological approach was used to see the phenomena that occurred when students used Quillbot. Phenomenological researchers cannot simply make up questions that their participants have to answer quickly, but they have to make up questions where participants have to remember and wonder about the nature of the phenomenon (Manen, 1990). Six undergraduate English language education students from Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta were invited to participate in this study.

A questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used to collect data in this study. 10 open-ended questions were given in the questionnaire regarding the experiences that participants have had while using Quillbot in their academic writing and were shared through Google Forms. To gain more information and complete the participants' answers from the questionnaire that has been distributed, an in-depth interview was used as the second data collection technique in this study. The instruments in this data gathering employed a triangulation method where both questionnaires and in-depth interviews aimed to complement each other's data. Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014)

The data gathered from the questionnaire and interviews were then processed using phenomenological analysis by Moustakas (1994) which involved 3 steps to arrive at an understanding related to students' lived experiences and perceptions in using Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool in their academic writing. The first step before researchers get into data gathering is the epoche step or bracket step, where the researchers are required to put aside all their preconceptions of the topic being studied before conducting the research and collecting data. Afterward, the data from each participant's answers that have been transcribed will be analyzed in the transcendental phenomenology reduction step. At this step, the researchers eliminated the existing data by taking important statements from participants' answers and clustered themes. The last step in the data analysis is imaginative variation, where the researchers deduced important themes that have been found

from the participants' experiences into a possible meaning that can answer the determined research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To address the research questions regarding what lived experiences interpreted by students after utilizing Quillbot in their academic writing, the researchers have analyzed the results of the data that has been collected and it has come up with four themes related to the most common lived experiences interpreted by students and will be explained below:

### ***Theme 1: Quillbot's benefit and Students' future use of Quillbot***

Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool comes to improve users' writing quality. With the features provided by Quillbot, students claimed that Quillbot has many benefits for them. The improvement in writing quality was mentioned by students as an example of the benefits provided by Quillbot, as explained in the excerpts below:

*I think Quillbot is also helpful in improving academic writing performance. Sentences are more varied, less monotonous, and there is less repetition of words (participant 1)*

*I feel there is an improvement in my writing quality. It is effective for increasing vocabulary because of the word suggestions given by Quillbot (participant 3)*

*Sometimes we have grammar errors. It can help to correct the grammar (participant 2)*

The use of Quillbot in the writing process, indeed, directs students to better and high-quality writing content (Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022), so the above results confirmed the improvement in the quality of participants' writing, especially in the aspects of vocabulary and grammar. A similar result is also shown in previous research conducted by Sulistyanningrum (2021) where in that study, an average of 3.67 out of 30 students mentioned that Quillbot helped them in applying correct grammar and finding the right synonyms. Quillbot's ability to paraphrase sentences by switching the wording or providing synonyms to the user was also considered by participants to improve the quality of their writing, considering that they will produce writing using a more sophisticated vocabulary, not seem too monotonous, and look more academic.

In addition, the purpose of using an online paraphrasing tool is to avoid plagiarism that can occur due to the use of multiple sources in the writing process (Fitria, 2022; Nurmayanti & Suryadi, 2023). Most students who participated in this study also experienced the same benefits if they were discussing plagiarism. Quillbot was seen to be able to help participants reduce the level of plagiarism as they had to make citations from various sources.

*If it improves performance, it is definitely yes, because first, I think it avoids being detected as plagiarism (participant 3)*

*Reduce the level of plagiarism in terms of paraphrasing (participant 6)*

As students who write academic writing are asked not to commit plagiarism (Fitria, 2022), the online paraphrasing tool can assist them in paraphrasing someone's statement, with the use of words and sentence structures that cannot be detected as plagiarism. Additionally, Quillbot is also valued as a software that composes error-free original scientific papers in English (Nurmayanti & Suryadi, 2023) so the above results showed that Quillbot also helped students generate originality in their academic writing.

Furthermore, Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool has both free and paid versions, which was also considered an advantage, as explained in the excerpt below:

*The advantages are no payment which is free, accessible everywhere, anywhere, and anytime. And also, user-friendly. (Participant 3)*

The existence of Quillbot with the free version provided convenience for students to access this online paraphrasing tool. Due to its ease of use, the students only need to input the sentence to be paraphrased and then they will immediately receive the result by simply clicking on a single button. Moreover, Quillbot being known as a user-friendly AI allows students to easily access this AI regardless of their English proficiency (Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022). In this matter, Quillbot as a user-friendly AI has an impact on its users who will easily use it without the need to acquire English proficiency or the ability to use technology. Participants also mentioned that Quillbot can be used easily wherever and whenever they want to use it.

Thus, with the benefits felt by participants, especially in improving the quality of writing and decreasing the level of plagiarism in their academic writing, a strong feeling to continue using Quillbot as a reliable online paraphrasing tool by participants emerged. Consequently, they said they would continue to rely on Quillbot in their writing process.

*For me, I will continue to use Quillbot because I know how good it is. (Participant 2)*

*For now, and until now, I still rely on Quillbot (participant 3)*

*Yes. But with additional steps. But for citation, because it's very helpful, I will probably continue to use it. (Participant 4)*

By serving as an online paraphrasing tool that has many benefits, students were more likely to continue to utilize Quillbot as one of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) that helps them in writing. Similar results were also addressed in a study conducted by Xuyen (2023) where in the study, where 80.3% of students would continue to use Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool that they rely on. In addition, the influence of Quillbot on students' writing process also made them eager to recommend this online paraphrasing tool to others.

### **Theme 2: Students' perceptions of autonomy and assistance**

Based on the data gathered, most students who participated in this study viewed Quillbot as an online paraphrasing tool that exists to aid them in writing, but not to substitute their own writing skills.

*When it comes to skills, maybe it will only be as an addition. Because if it's the primary one, then the skill will be lost (participant 5)*

*It becomes an additional tool that assists us in writing. I started to familiarize myself with just writing what is in my brain, just writing with the vocabulary that I know, maybe then if I feel that there is a repetition of vocabulary in my thesis writing, then I just use Quillbot (participant 3)*

*If I need to, I think my sentences are too basic, or the vocabulary I used is not sufficiently varied, or I doubt my results, then I just use Quillbot to help me (participant 1)*

Although Quillbot can help resolve students' problems in paraphrasing, they still perceived Quillbot as additional software to help them perfect their writing skills. According to Fitria (2022), students who write academic writing do need assistance in paraphrasing their ideas so that they can express themselves differently. However, students' autonomy, which in this context is English proficiency and writing skills, will remain the first thing they depend on, before deciding to use Quillbot in assisting them

to write and make their writing look more academic. Students' autonomy can be interpreted as how students can learn independently and rely on their own abilities (Cirocki et al., 2019) so in the results above, most students tended to rely on their own abilities in writing such as using vocabulary they knew and composing sentence structures according to their abilities before they used the assistance offered by Quillbot. As mentioned in previous study conducted by Kartika (2018) involving student autonomy is needed in order to hone English proficiency and become more independent.

In addition, students explained that the use of Quillbot as an additional tool that helped them in writing tended to be used when they started to find difficulties in constructing more varied sentences. Previous research conducted by Xuyen (2023) showed that Quillbot proved to be a software that students relied on in overcoming problems related to paraphrasing.

### ***Theme 3: Students' ethical considerations when utilizing Quillbot***

One of the functions of Quillbot that makes students often use this online paraphrasing tool is its usefulness in paraphrasing someone's statement that they will use as a source in their academic writing (Nurmayanti & Suryadi, 2023; Muliani Sukma et al., 2023). But using Quillbot to paraphrase someone's ideas still allows them to commit unintentional plagiarism, because the results of Quillbot often change only a few words from the input given by the user. Authors who commit plagiarism in paraphrasing will be easily identified if they do not write citations, leave the original unchanged, and modify only one or two words (Walker, 2008). Therefore, participants in this study mentioned that some additional steps after using Quillbot need to be taken to prevent unintentional plagiarism as a form of ethical consideration, as described in the excerpt below:

*I usually use plagiarism checks like Turnitin to check the plagiarism if any. For example, I paraphrase from Quillbot and I still check whether it still includes plagiarism or not (participant 2)*

Turnitin became one of the Artificial Intelligence that students were counting on as Quillbot's companion software to ensure that the results of Quillbot itself do not lead them to unintentional plagiarism. With the use of text-matching software, Turnitin analyzes how similar a given document is to pre-existing documents by comparing its content to those in institutional paper repositories, standard repositories, and online sources (Nketsiah et al., 2023). Thus, according to participants, the use of Turnitin as an additional step after using Quillbot can help them reduce the possibility of plagiarism that exists from Quillbot's paraphrase results.

In addition, the use of Grammarly was also considered by students as an AI that can help them avoid unintentional plagiarism as they said below:

*For me, after the results from Quillbot, I immediately enter them into Grammarly because in Grammarly it also tends to be replaced. the vocabulary is also given suggestions and then also in Grammarly it is more to justify the cohesion and coherence of the results from the Quillbot. So, for me, it is to ensure again (Participant 3)*

*yes, usually I'm afraid, especially when we cite theory in the thesis. I'm a bit scared if it's plagiarism. that's why I usually change it using Grammarly. I paraphrase again and then after that, I use Grammarly in case my grammar is wrong (Participant 1)*

Students showed concern if they only relied on Quillbot to paraphrase other people's statements. Therefore, the use of Grammarly also helped them to avoid unintentional plagiarism because this AI helped students detect the level of plagiarism as well as correct wrong sentence construction that led to sentences not having suitable coherence. Grammarly is the most popular program for checking grammar, identifying errors in syntax, correcting spelling and sentence constructions, and checking for plagiarism (Fitria, 2021). As avoiding plagiarism is crucial (Sahib et al., 2022) when writing academic papers, students do not blindly use Quillbot's paraphrase results but they will take additional steps, before incorporating Quillbot's paraphrase results into their writing.

#### ***Theme 4: Students' adoption of Quillbot's suggestion***

One of the drawbacks of Quillbot is its failure to provide suggestions in paraphrasing or constructing sentences or paragraphs according to the meaning or level intended by the user (Haleem et al., 2022; Fitria, 2022). In addition, according to Prentice & Kinden (2018), the online paraphrasing tool strategy to paraphrase sentences by replacing words with synonyms shows that the synonyms used make most of the writing in some essays incomprehensible. This was also experienced by most participants who often felt that the suggestions given by Quillbot were not entirely correct and could not be directly applied to their writing.

*The problem is that sometimes the results are from a machine, it's also often errors, which means it's not 100% accurate (participant 3)*

*Sometimes the word suggestion is not right (participant 4)*

With such drawbacks, students realized that they had to be highly selective in taking the suggestions that Quillbot gave to their writing to prevent this AI from leading them to a different meaning they wanted to express. Quillbot users still have to double-check the suggestions generated from Quillbot and are free to decide whether they want to use the suggestions or not (Nurmayanti & Suryadi, 2023).

*Now I am more selective. So, the steps are added, and I try to proofread it. Before entering it, I rewrite it first, then enter it into Quillbot, then read it again (participant 4)*

*So, more, even more selective, I know how to paraphrase better (participant 5)*

*I really take a look at it as I reread it and then after that, I feel it even though I still use my feelings, but how come it's like, how come from these words to the previous words, how come it doesn't seem to be connected from the previous words. For example, we paraphrase the ideas of people we enter into Quillbot, then the main idea is not conveyed (participant 3)*

Since participants realized that Quillbot's suggestions did not all contain correct sentences, they became more selective in adopting the suggestions given by Quillbot. Rereading the paraphrase results from Quillbot was one of the strategies that participants employed to be more selective in adopting suggestions from Quillbot to ensure that the meaning they wanted to convey could be clearly written in their writing. It can be concluded that by rereading the results of Quillbot's suggestions, participants were not likely to fully rely on Quillbot's results to paraphrase their writing, but participants still relied on their own ability to write.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examines how students interpret the use of Quillbot in their academic writing process. The use of Quillbot as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to tackle the problems in academic writing, especially paraphrasing, is considered very

beneficial (Muliani Sukma et al., 2023; Nurmayanti & Suryadi, 2023; Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023). Quillbot is seen by participants in this study as a valuable tool in the academic writing process because of the benefits provided by this online paraphrasing tool such as improving the quality of students' writing in the aspects of vocabulary and grammar, reducing the level of plagiarism in students' academic writing, and Quillbot is also considered as a user-friendly tool that can be used easily by users.

However, based on the lived experience of the participants presented in this study, they showed concern that the continuous use of AI could replace their own skills making them realize that Quillbot is only a tool that supports their academic writing process and cannot replace their own English proficiency and writing skills. This is in line with previous research conducted by Perkins (2023) where it is mentioned that the use of AI raises concerns for students and higher education institutions because AI tends to reduce the ability of users to engage their own skills. Therefore, the results of this study also showed that students have the awareness of not relying excessively on Quillbot in the academic writing process and students became more selective in adopting Quillbot suggestions as well as using some additional steps as a companion to the use of Quillbot.

Exploring more about teachers' practices in encouraging students to not rely heavily on Artificial intelligence in the teaching and learning process such as Quillbot can be used as further research as in this research the researchers only focus on the lived experience felt by students while using Quillbot which led to the conclusion that students have an awareness of the importance of having boundaries and tricks in using AI.

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