

EMPLOYING THE QUILLBOT APPLICATION IN ORDER TO SHARPEN PARAPHRASING SKILLS IN WRITING ACADEMIC ESSAYS FOR ENGLISH - MAJORED STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES - THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 18/10/2022	This study was aimed at uncovering not only the effective possibility of Quillbot in terms of enhancing students' academic essay writing capacity but also students' attitudes towards this application. Regarding the paraphrasing tool, Quillbot utilizes a variety of effective measures to paraphrase the text, including: using synonyms, changing word class, modifying structures, and changing word order in a sentence. The samples for the study were 20 third - year English Language majors who had advanced levels. With respect to methodology, the action research method and a combination of a pre and post-test with a questionnaire were implemented. Firstly, the students' pre-test and post-test before and after a twelve-week action were applied to assess their writing performance. A questionnaire was, subsequently, delivered to investigate their attitudes towards different aspects during their time making use of Quillbot. The preliminary findings revealed that it somehow enabled study participants to build up their vocabulary, and cultivate their ability to use language flexibly and effectively, and that students showed welcome attitudes to this application. The results of this research would be beneficial for lecturers to conduct more studies to assist students in improving their English writing.
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ÁP DỤNG ỨNG DỤNG QUILLBOT NHẪM CẢI THIỆN KỸ NĂNG TÁI DIỄN ĐẠT TRONG VIẾT BÀI LUẬN HỌC THUẬT ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH, TRƯỜNG NGOẠI NGỮ, ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 18/10/2022	Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích đánh giá về hiệu quả của Quillbot trong việc nâng cao năng lực viết luận học thuật của sinh viên và thái độ của sinh viên đối với ứng dụng này. Về công cụ tái diễn đạt, Quillbot sử dụng nhiều biện pháp hiệu quả để tái diễn đạt văn bản, bao gồm: sử dụng từ đồng nghĩa, thay đổi loại từ, sửa đổi cấu trúc và thay đổi thứ tự từ trong câu. Các mẫu cho nghiên cứu là 20 sinh viên chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh năm thứ ba. Phương pháp nghiên cứu hành động và sự kết hợp giữa kiểm tra trước và sau với bảng câu hỏi đã được sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu phục vụ cho nghiên cứu. Đầu tiên, có bài kiểm tra dành cho sinh viên trước và sau mười tuần áp dụng để đánh giá khả năng viết của họ. Sau đó, một bảng câu hỏi đã được đưa ra để điều tra thái độ của họ đối với các khía cạnh khác nhau trong thời gian họ sử dụng Quillbot. Kết quả sơ bộ cho thấy Quillbot đã giúp những người tham gia nghiên cứu xây dựng vốn từ vựng và trau dồi khả năng sử dụng ngôn ngữ linh hoạt và hiệu quả, đồng thời sinh viên đã thể hiện thái độ hoan nghênh ứng dụng này. Kết quả của nghiên cứu này sẽ có lợi cho các giảng viên trong việc thực hiện nhiều nghiên cứu hơn để hỗ trợ sinh viên cải thiện khả năng viết tiếng Anh của họ.
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1. Introduction

Writing in general, especially academic writing, is a tough skill for students [1]. This is because this skill requires students to gain an in-depth understanding of writing a well-organised paragraph, or an essay, and an insight into writing English. Learners are required to have sufficient knowledge of writing a paragraph, or essay to be able to structure that type of writing. Besides, learners also need to have good vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar to be able to easily write an effective essay. Paraphrasing skills are of paramount importance in academic-based writing [2], [3]. These skills allow students to write accurately and logically connect concepts in sentences, essays, or paragraphs. Nevertheless, it is really challenging to master these skills in light of the restriction of lexical resources and grammatical range and accuracy [3]. A majority of students are struggling with this skill due to a lack of vocabulary, as mentioned in an unofficial interview by the author team at School of Foreign Languages (SFL) in Thai Nguyen.

In terms of paraphrasing, there are a wealth of viewpoints associated with the definition of paraphrasing. Richard and Schmidt [4] defined “paraphrase” as “an expression of the meaning of a word or phrase using other words or phrases, often in an attempt to make. The meaning easier to understand”. Bailey [5, p. 420] has the same definition that paraphrasing involves re-writing a text so that the language is substantially different while the content stays the same. Furthermore, paraphrasing is the process of expressing information or ideas from other sources in your own words in a similar number of words as the source material. Paraphrasing is not merely substituting words with synonyms or modifying sentence structure. It entails extensively rephrasing a text while keeping the original meaning. Recognizing the original source with proper reference is required for paraphrasing Chomsky [6].

Keck C. [7] states that paraphrasing is undoubtedly an essential skill in academic writing. It could allow learners to avoid plagiarism given that, through the paraphrasing process, language learners are more likely to restate, condense, or clarify another author's ideas in their own words as well as provide their individual arguments and analysis [8]. A similar concept could be seen in the view of Bailey [9], which is that paraphrasing is an efficient way for writers to avoid plagiarism. Meanwhile, Hirvela and Du [10] suppose that paraphrasing is not only a useful linguistic tool for L2 learners to manipulate the language of existing literature to integrate it into their writing (knowledge telling), but it is also a meaning-making process that contributes to developing the content of their writing (knowledge transformation). This indicates that effective paraphrasing can boost a piece of writing's persuasiveness and, consequently, rhetorical effectiveness. This transformation can be done by using a number of common methods: According to Bailey [11], first, writers could rewrite a sentence or a paragraph by using synonyms. Other methods which are mentioned by Bailey [11] to paraphrase are changing word order and combining these above-mentioned ways.

Regarding the academic essay, it is a type of essay in which the writer expresses his or her perspective or engages in a discussion about a specific topic through in-depth analysis based on accepted theories and the provision of solutions to effectively overcome the problem.

A well-organized structure of an academic essay consists of three parts: an introduction, which contains a thesis statement, a body of the essay, consisting of a topic sentence and supporting sentences, and a conclusion which provides final commentary, and suggestions, predictions, or opinions associated with the topic of the writer, Keith S. al [12] and Els Van Geyte [13].

Similarly, Els Van Geyte [13] suggested that the primary frame of an essay include 3 parts: an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion. A similar view could be seen in the concept of Oshima [14]. He suggests that an essay has three primary parts, comprising an introductory paragraph, a body (at least one, but usually two or more paragraphs), and a conclusion. An essay introduction consists of two parts: a few general statements to attract your reader's attention and a thesis statement to state the main idea of the essay.

Therefore, the emergence of the Quillbot application is more likely to allow students to sharpen their paraphrasing skills in particular and the capability to write academic essays in general. Nevertheless, there is little research conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of this paraphrasing-related application in enhancing the rewriting skills of learners and uncovering their attitude towards this app, and hence, in this sense, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent does Quillbot affect the third-year majors' paraphrasing skills when writing academic essays?
- What are the students' attitudes towards Quillbot when applying paraphrasing skills in academic essays?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research sites and participants

The study was administered to 35 student members of English Writing Advance 3 at a public university in Vietnam. These students are all Vietnamese speakers aged twenty to twenty-three.

However, their English language proficiency is different, ranging from pre-intermediate to advanced, and they might be freshmen or senior students. As the members of the project, they have a strong passion for journalism and wish to improve their writing skills.

2.2. Research instrument

A closed-ended questionnaire was employed in this study. This study's questionnaire was adapted from a number of sources [10]. The questionnaire aims to investigate the student's attitudes toward the Task Based Language Teaching instructed in reading class. There were two parts to the questionnaire: the usefulness of Quillbot and the students' attitude towards Quillbot. The questionnaire was designed based on a scale of 0-10: Weak, Average, Fair, Good and Excellent. The construct validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a field expert to guarantee its trustworthiness, i.e., whether the questionnaire assessed what it was designed to measure. It was also translated into Vietnamese so that the participants would not have any difficulties with the questionnaire and the translation was validated by experts. It was then tested with third-year students at SFL who were not included in the original research. Lastly, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .72 suggested that the internal consistency of the survey was satisfactory.

2.3. Data collection and analysis procedures

The researchers gave 10 survey questions to the English Writing Advanced 3 group right after the end of 10 weeks of study to assess learners' attitudes towards Quillbot and the effectiveness of the application. Survey questions were sent to learners via Google Form. The survey was conducted in the last 15 minutes of the lesson.

Data preparation was conducted over a period of 10 weeks based on the survey questions and research questions and classified into two types of data: data based on exercises, and numerical data whether based on tests. The data obtained were checked through the calculation process as well as the lecturer's evaluation. Then, they were analyzed through data analysis software like SPSS and Excel. After finishing the data analysis process and getting the results, the data were selected by the method of data collection and processing to be able to reach the final result.

3. Result and discussion

3.1. Result of the first research question: To what extent does Quillbot affect third-year majors' paraphrasing skills when writing academic essays?

All the collected data from the pre-test and post-test and questionnaires is analyzed and discussed to provide the answers to the first research questions.

The table 1 shows the examined participants' pre-test performance in scientific research.

Table 1. *The pre-test results*

Sub-group	Number of students	%
Excellent (9-10)	0	0
Good (8)	1	5
Fair to good (7)	5	25
Fair (5-6)	12	60
Very poor and inadequate (1-4)	2	10

According to the pre-test results, the students in the class were divided into 5 main groups: excellent group (mark 9), good group (mark 8), fair to good group (mark 7), fair group (mark 5 and 6), and very poor group (mark 2, 3, and 4).

Looking at the presented data in the table 1, it is clear that while there was no student who gained excellent marks, the opposite was true for the figure for the fair-mark learners, which was the highest figure, at 60%, in comparison with the remaining groups. There were 25% of students who got 7 marks, compared to 5% and 10% of students obtaining good marks, and very poor and inadequate marks, respectively.

The table 2 illustrates the post-test results of students in scientific research.

Table 2. *The post-test results*

Sub-group	Number of students.	%
Excellent (9-10)	1	5
Good (8)	2	10
Fair to good (7)	8	40
Fair (5-6)	9	45
Very poor and inadequate (1-4)	0	0

According to the post-test results, the students in the class were divided into 5 main groups: excellent group (mark 9), good group (mark 8), fair to good group (mark 7), fair group (marks 5 and 6) and a very poor group (mark 2, 3, and 4).

It is immediately obvious that after the 10-week application of Quillbot in academic writing, the data had positive modifications. While the number of students who got excellent scores experienced a slight rise to 1, which is extremely impressive, there was a significant decline to 9 (45%) in the number of their fair-mark counterparts in comparison with the previous tests. Meanwhile, the post-test witnessed an increase in the number of students who gained 8, and 7 scores, with the respective figures being 2 and 8. Amazingly, there were no students who received very poor or inadequate scores.

The table 3 demonstrates the result of analyzing the pre-test and the post-test through the use of a paired-sample test in the SPSS application.

Table 3. *Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	6,420	20	,8847	,1978
	Posttest	6,965	20	,8475	,1895

Furthermore, the analyzed results of this data by the use of a paired-sample test in the SPSS application revealed that there was a significant difference in the results between the students' mean score in the pre-test and post-test. The students' mean score in the post-test was higher than their counterparts' mean score in the pre-test, with the respective figures being 6,965 and 6,420. This demonstrated that using Quillbot to cultivate students' capacity to paraphrase enabled the academic essay-related performance of students to be significantly enhanced. In conclusion, by comparing the results of the students in the pre-test and post-test, the researchers concluded that the ICT-based application, particularly Quillbot, was unboundedly beneficial to students' ability to write academic essays.

3.2. Result of the second research question

Data from questionnaires of students' attitudes and perception of the use of Quillbot in improving academic writing.

3.2.1. Participants' major

The figure 1 shows the proportion of examined participants majoring in different fields in the study.

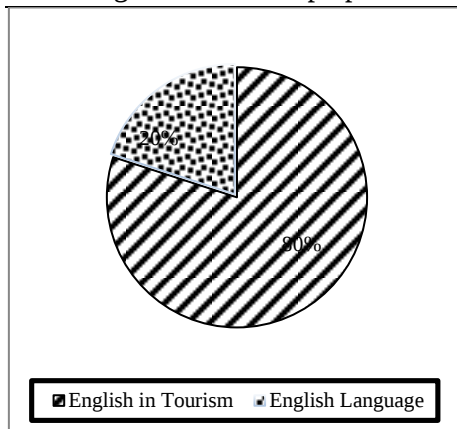


Figure 1. Participants' major

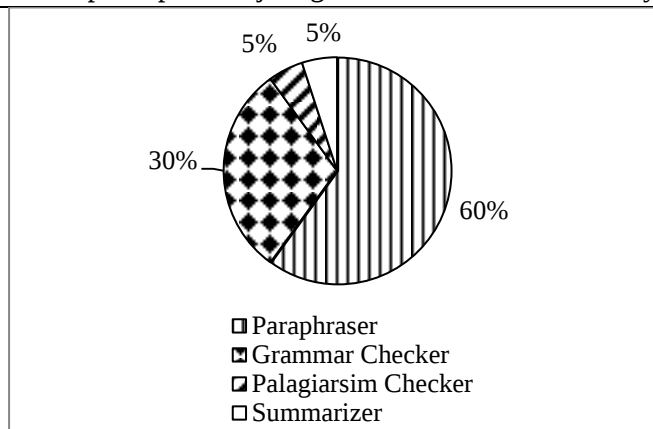


Figure 2. The percentage of students frequently focusing on different kinds functions of Quillbot

The figure 1 shows that most of the students are English-related majors. While 80% of students engaging in this study are from the English in Tourism major, the rest of the participants are pursuing the English language major.

3.2.2. The underlying functions focused on by participants

The figure 2 compares the percentage of students utilizing distinct kinds of functions of Quillbot.

The given pie chart illustrates the proportion of examined students who concentrated on various primary functions of Quillbot. It is clear that the percentage of participants who had a tendency to frequently focus on the paraphraser is highest, accounting for 60% of the total, followed by 30% of students usually using the grammar checker function. The tiny percentage of students concentrating on plagiarism checker and summarizer functions is similar, with the figure being 5%.

3.2.3. The frequency of the use of Quillbot

The figure 3 below shows the information in terms of the frequency of using Quillbot by students who participated in the research.

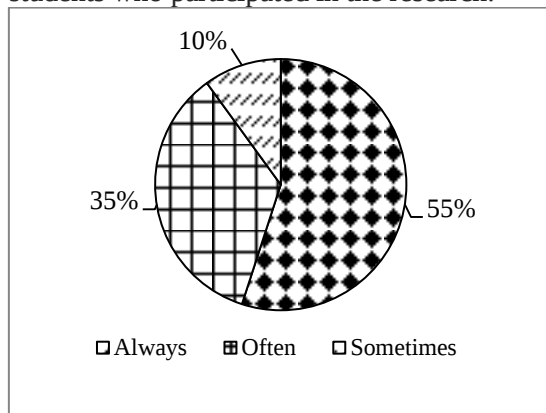


Figure 3. The frequency of the use of Quillbot

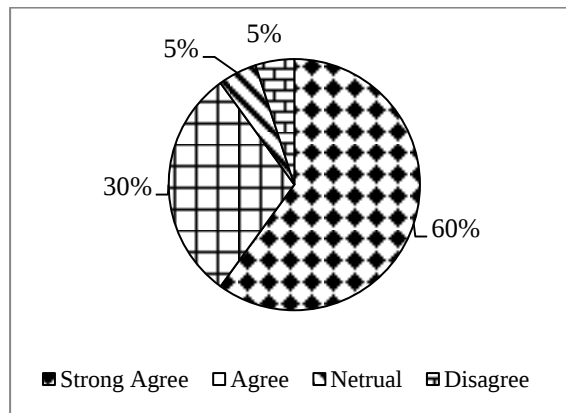


Figure 4. The effectiveness of Quillbot in improving students' writing skills

The figure 3 shows that there were 55% of students who used Quillbot in their English studies frequently, in comparison with only 10% of students using this application on a regular basis. Meanwhile, the percentage of those who sometimes applied to Quillbot was 35%.

3.2.4. The effectiveness of Quillbot in improving students' writing skills

The figure 4 below indicates the students' responses to survey about the effectiveness of Quillbot in improving their writing skills.

Looking at the figure 4, it is immediately obvious that the vast majority of participants unquestionably agreed that Quillbot is effective in allowing such individuals to enhance their writing ability, accounting for 60%, compared to 30% of examined learners who agreed with the view of the effectiveness of Quillbot. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who neutralized and disagreed with the aforementioned conviction is the same, at 5% each.

3.2.5. The insights that learners gain from employing Quillbot

The figure 5 illustrates the information about the insights that learners gain from employing Quillbot.

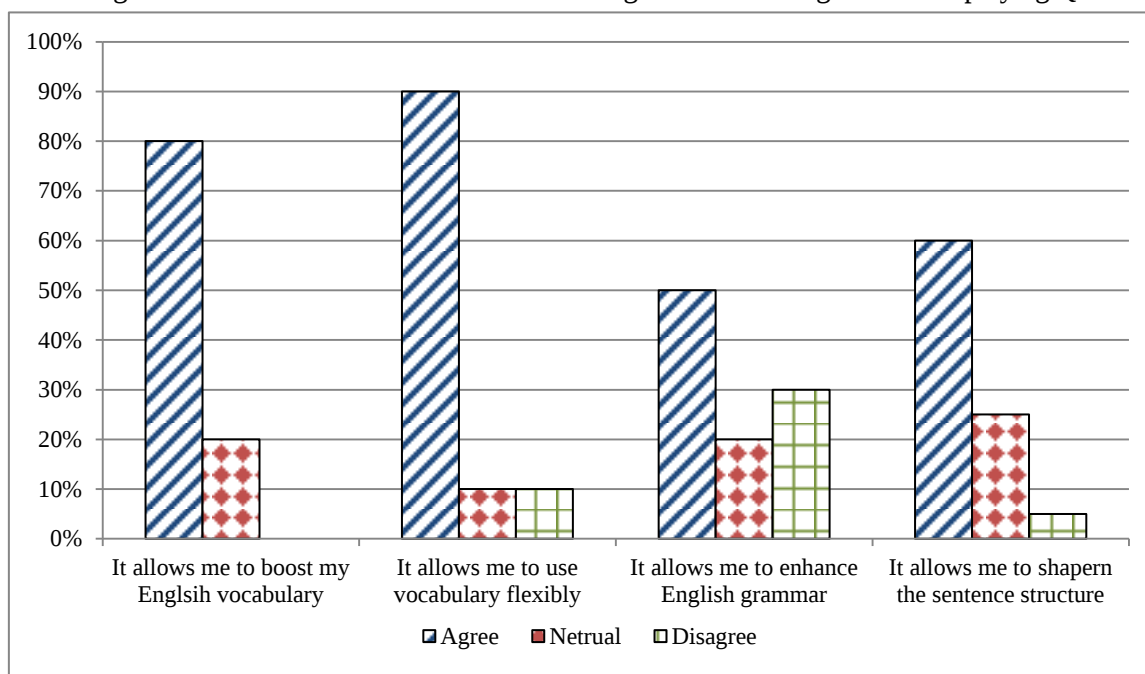


Figure 5. The insights that learners gain from employing Quillbot

With respect to what students learned from applying Quillbot during the writing process of academic essays, it is clear that most students who participated in the study endorsed the view that Quillbot enabled them to widen their English vocabulary, whereas 20% of their participants had a tendency to neutralize the view. Regarding the Quillbot's effectiveness associated with utilizing vocabulary flexibly, 90% of the examined students agreed that it is advantageous, compared to the similar figures for participants who neutralized and disagreed with this idea. A similarity could be seen in the figures for the conviction that this application helped them to enhance their English grammar. The proportion of students who advocated this view was highest, at 50%, followed by the figures for students who neutralized and disagreed with this view, with the respective figures being 20% and 30%. With respect to sentence structure-related effectiveness, the percentage of participants being in favor of the view that it allowed them to cultivate the sentence structure was 70%, and the figures for participants neutralizing and disagreeing with the view were lower, at 25% and 5%, respectively.

3.2.6. The likelihood of students' willingness to upgrade to the premium version of this app

The figure 6 shows the proportion of students being willing to upgrade to the premium version of this app.

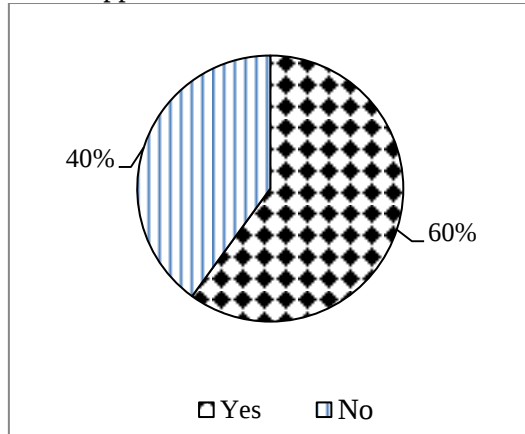


Figure 6. The likelihood of students' willingness to upgrade to the premium version of Quillbot

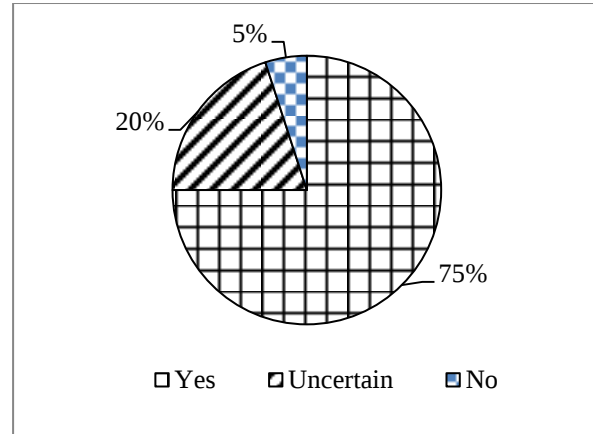


Figure 7. The students' possibility of continuing to utilize Quillbot in the future

While there were 60% of students who were more likely to be willing to purchase the premium version of this quillbolt-related platform, the rest of the students refused to upgrade to the advanced version.

3.2.7. The students' possibility of continuing to utilize this app in the future

The figure 7 shows the information about the students' possibility of continuing to utilize this app in the future.

It is immediately obvious that a vast majority of the examined participants would continue to use this application in their later studies, whereas only 5% of their counterparts were unwilling to use this application. The remaining students had hesitation in implementing Quillbot.

In summary, Quillbot generally received positive feedback from participants in this study. In addition, most students endorsed the view that Quillbot made a clear contribution to their improvement in writing academic essays. Therefore, it is undeniable that this application has advantageous effects on writing performance of English learners and that it should be universally adopted to sharpen their writing skills in general and their ability to write academic essays in particular.

3.3. Discussion

In this research, this paraphrasing of Quillbot used Standard Mode, which serves to rewrite and modify the input text in balance while still maintaining the (original) meaning of the text and making the result look more original. In making paraphrases by using Quillbot, there are several ways of paraphrasing analyzed in this research. They are as follows: paraphrasing using equations or synonyms, paraphrasing by changing the order of words in sentences, paraphrasing by changing the form of the word, and paraphrasing by using active or passive sentences. Employing this app enabled the study participants to enhance their English capacity in general, writing essays, and paraphrasing ability in particular. However, this research has several drawbacks. In light of using only the free version, this study has not taken advantage of all features, which means that it does not provide a perfect overview and precise analysis in terms of Quillbot.

This section presents a discussion of the primary findings, which have similarities and differences with previous studies. To begin with, there are several similar results in comparison with previous studies. Quillbot allowed students to significantly enhance their writing skills,

particularly in the writing of academic essays, through broadening their lexical resources and sharpening their variety of sentence structures, as well as enhancing grammar correction. This result is shared with the findings of the research conducted by Tira Nur Fitria [1].

Apart from a number of aforementioned similarities, these findings show a number of differences with previous studies that should be taken into consideration. First and foremost, while the research conducted by Tira Nur Fitria [1] applied a descriptive qualitative method, this research utilized an action research method. Another difference is that the research conducted by Tira Nur Fitria [1] made use of Quillbot in both the standard version and the premium version, while this research was just studied in the free version, and therefore the findings of the previous research are a more perfect picture in comparison with our research.

4. Conclusion and implications

It can be concluded that the student's attitude about applying Quillbot in the teaching process for the purpose of improving paraphrasing skills is generally quite favorable. Through the articles, it can be seen that the paraphrasing skills of learners have been significantly improved in sentence structure, word order, and parallel structure. The results of the articles are evaluated meticulously and accurately by the teacher. Besides, the lecturer also creates some group activities and games to increase the interest of learners. From there, we can see that Quillbot can really be a tool to help learners improve their English skills. Previous researchers on Quillbot have also shown that Quillbot is a tool that can really improve writing skills for learners, and it also provides some useful features for language learning.

The following instructive implications are based on the foregoing. For learners, to achieve the best results, learners must really be interested in learning, motivated, and enthusiastic. This means that they need to develop a learning goal, be creative in learning, actively participate in class, discuss and interact with teachers and classmates, and train themselves to be self-sufficient. Teachers need to note that the tasks are student-based. Moreover, the exercises they design must have a connection between skills in English, combining knowledge with real life. Teachers should develop regular writing activities and reasonable frequency to keep students interested. Only when learners have an interest will the results achieve good results.

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