



EFL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF USING QUILLBOT FOR PARAPHRASING IN THESIS WRITING

Anggun Hasanah Dwi Andina¹, Ahmad Ridha², Hidayati Hidayati*³
¹anggunhasanah@student.unja.ac.id, ²ahmad.ridha@unja.ac.id, ³hidayati@unja.ac.id

¹Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

²Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

*³Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Thesis writing requires students to engage with scholarly sources and paraphrase them accurately while preserving the original meaning. To support this process, AI-assisted writing tools such as QuillBot have become increasingly popular among EFL students. However, the value of these tools depends on how students use them in academic writing. Participants were selected through a preliminary questionnaire and data were collected via semi-structured interviews with three English Education students. Selected thesis excerpts were also comparatively analyzed across the original source text, the QuillBot-generated paraphrase, and the participants' final revision to trace how AI-generated output was modified before incorporation, while interview data were analyzed thematically. The findings show that participants integrated QuillBot into their writing process while recognizing its limitations: rather than accepting AI-generated paraphrases directly, they compared them with the original source, critically evaluated their accuracy, and reconstructed them before use. Documentary evidence confirmed that final texts consistently differed from QuillBot's output, indicating participants treated it as an initial draft rather than a final product. The study concludes that QuillBot functioned as a learning support tool rather than a writing substitute, underscoring the importance of critical AI literacy in academic writing.

Keywords: EFL Students, Paraphrasing, Experience, Quillbot, Thesis Writing

A. INTRODUCTION

As a fundamental academic writing skill, paraphrasing allows writers to incorporate information from source texts into their own writing while preserving the original meaning and demonstrating their understanding of the source (Keck, 2006). Effective paraphrasing is not merely a matter of substituting words with synonyms; rather, writers are required to comprehend source texts, reconstruct ideas, and express them using appropriate lexical and syntactic forms (Bailey, 2011; Keck, 2006). In thesis writing, this skill becomes particularly important, as undergraduate students are expected to review previous studies, synthesize evidence from multiple scholarly sources, and construct evidence-based academic arguments in accordance with academic conventions (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). The ability to paraphrase accurately and appropriately is therefore essential, not only for integrating existing

knowledge into academic writing but also for maintaining academic integrity throughout the thesis-writing process.

Although paraphrasing is an essential component of academic writing, it has been shown by previous studies to be a cognitively demanding task, as writers are required to comprehend source texts, distinguish key ideas, reconstruct information, and preserve the original meaning while expressing it in new linguistic forms (Keck, 2006; Shi, 2012). Even for experienced writers, these demands make paraphrasing a common challenge in academic writing (Howard et al., 2010). For EFL students, the challenges become even greater, as they often encounter additional difficulties related to limited academic vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and the ability to restructure ideas appropriately in English (Liao & Tseng, 2010; Shi, 2012). These difficulties are very apparent in the context of writing a thesis at Universitas Jambi. The issue for many English Education students is that they cannot paraphrase texts well enough to avoid too much similarity to the original wording. The problem becomes evident when similarity-detection software (e.g., Turnitin) flags students' drafts for high similarity scores. Some students, not intentionally, change the meaning of the theoretical concepts they use, beyond the level of wording, which damages the credibility of their arguments; others, afraid of making such errors, fall back on too much direct quotation, rather than engaging analytically with the source material. Such recurrent issues point to the fact that the paraphrasing struggles of EFL students extend beyond individual lexical choices and point to a more fundamental difficulty of reconciling understanding, meaning preservation and linguistic reformulation within the framework of academic writing conventions. These challenges can impact students' ability to synthesise information from sources and conform to academic writing conventions while writing the thesis.

Meeting these difficulties involves more than just generating a different wording of a given sentence; it involves a systematic understanding of what constitutes a good paraphrase. Prior research has identified several specific linguistic strategies for paraphrasing a source text while preserving its original meaning. These strategies include replacing words with synonyms, changing sentence structure, changing word class, combining several sentences into one, providing explanations for technical terms, reordering information, and condensing multiple ideas into concise statements (Bailey, 2011; Keck, 2006; Yu Chih Sun & Yang, 2015). These strategies serve as a theoretical benchmark for the assessment of both manually produced and AI-generated paraphrases, since an adequate paraphrase should draw on several of these techniques, rather than mimicking superficial word substitution alone. In this light, the difficulties of paraphrasing described above may be mitigated not by completely delegating the reformulation process to an AI-based tool, but by using such strategies as a critical benchmark against which the appropriateness of AI-generated output can be evaluated and revised before it is incorporated into academic writing.

A range of writing support tools designed to assist various academic writing tasks, including paraphrasing, has been introduced by recent developments in artificial intelligence. Among these tools, QuillBot has been increasingly examined in studies on AI-assisted academic writing, as it assists users in rewriting texts through alternative lexical choices, sentence restructuring, and grammatical refinement while preserving the original meaning (Fitria, 2021). Several pedagogical benefits of using QuillBot in academic writing have been reported by previous studies. The tool has been found to support students in producing more effective paraphrases, improving sentence clarity, reducing textual similarity, and enhancing confidence

in academic writing (Chanpradit, 2025; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022; Thohir et al., 2024; Xuyen, 2023). These findings indicate that the paraphrasing process may be facilitated by QuillBot, thereby supporting students' academic writing. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of AI-assisted writing tools may depend not only on their technological capabilities but also on how students engage with and utilize them during the writing process. At the same time, not all evidence is positive on the AI-assisted paraphrasing tools. Rogerson & McCarthy (2017) warn that although such tools are easy to use and freely available, they should not be regarded as a stand-alone solution for academic writing because their unexamined use has been associated with risks such as distorted meaning, weakened writing quality, limited learning benefit and threats to academic integrity. This tension between what is reported to be the benefits of Quillbot and the risks of uncritical use of such tools suggests that the effectiveness of AI-assisted writing tools may not only be dependent on their technological capabilities but also on how students are engaging with and using them during the writing process, drawing on the strategic understanding of paraphrasing outlined above.

Although the potential benefits of QuillBot in supporting paraphrasing and academic writing have been demonstrated by previous studies, students' perceptions of the tool or its effectiveness in improving writing outcomes have primarily been emphasized (Chanpradit, 2025; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022; Thohir et al., 2024; Xuyen, 2023). Valuable evidence regarding the potential of QuillBot in academic writing is provided by these findings. However, additional insights into the role of AI-assisted writing tools in authentic academic writing may be offered by understanding how students use the tool throughout the paraphrasing process. This study therefore aims to explore EFL students' experiences of using QuillBot for paraphrasing during thesis writing in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Jambi. The study addresses the following research question: What are EFL students' experiences of using QuillBot for paraphrasing during thesis writing?

B. METHOD

To explore EFL students' experiences of using QuillBot for paraphrasing during thesis writing, this study employed a descriptive qualitative design. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate, as it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013). The study was conducted in the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants (Creswell, 2013). Prior to participant selection, a preliminary questionnaire was distributed to students from the 2021 cohort to identify those who had experience using QuillBot during thesis writing. Descriptive information regarding participants' use of QuillBot, including the duration of use, the version of QuillBot used, the thesis sections in which QuillBot was employed, and the frequency of use, was also collected through the questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire responses, participants were selected according to the following criteria: (1) they were active students or recent graduates from the 2021 cohort; (2) they had completed at least their thesis proposal seminar or thesis defense; (3) they had used QuillBot for paraphrasing during thesis writing; (4) they were willing to participate in semi-structured interviews; and (5) they agreed to provide excerpts from their thesis drafts for document analysis. Three participants met these criteria and were purposively selected. Their characteristics, derived from the preliminary

questionnaire, are presented in Table 1. All three participants had used QuillBot for more than one year and reported frequent use of the tool during thesis writing. The free version was used by two participants, whereas the premium version was subscribed to by one participant. Although the sections in which QuillBot was used varied across participants, all reported using the tool in multiple chapters of their theses. This number of participants was considered appropriate, as qualitative research prioritizes the depth and richness of participants' experiences rather than sample size (Creswell, 2013).

Table 1. Research Participants' Profiles

Participant	Gender	Age	Cohort	Status at Interview	QuillBot Version	Duration of Use
P1	Male	23	2021	Graduated (August 2025)	Premium	More than 1 year
P2	Male	22	2021	Active (9th semester)	Free	More than 1 year
P3	Female	22	2021	Graduated (May 2025)	Free	More than 1 year

Semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence were used to collect data, while participant selection and profiling were supported by the preliminary questionnaire. Between October and November 2025, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Indonesian via Zoom or Google Meet, depending on participants' preferences and availability. Each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Adapted from previous studies (Dewi et al., 2024; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022; Laila & Daulay, 2024; Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023; Xuyen, 2023), the interview protocol was organized into six broad areas covering participants' experiences of using QuillBot during thesis writing, their paraphrasing practices, revision processes, challenges encountered, learning experiences, and overall reflections on using QuillBot.

Three versions of selected excerpts from their thesis writing were provided by participants to complement the interview data: the original source text, the QuillBot-generated paraphrase, and the final version after their own revisions. Comparative document analysis was used to examine these excerpts, in order to understand how participants engaged with and modified AI-generated output before incorporating it into their theses. Rather than evaluating the linguistic quality of QuillBot, the analysis focused on the nature of participants' revisions, including reformulating ideas, restructuring sentences, condensing or elaborating information, and adapting paraphrases to the rhetorical conventions of academic writing. Participants' interview accounts were corroborated by the documentary evidence, rather than being used to generate independent themes.

Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, following six recursive phases: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Although these phases are presented sequentially, the analysis was conducted iteratively, allowing

themes to be refined throughout the analytical process. Alongside the thematic analysis, the comparative document analysis was conducted by examining the original source text, the QuillBot-generated paraphrase, and the participants' final revised versions. How participants transformed AI-generated output before integrating it into their academic writing was thereby identified by the researcher. Rather than serving as an independent source of findings, the documentary evidence was used to corroborate participants' reported paraphrasing practices and strengthen the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation.

Lincoln & Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were followed in this study to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Member checking, whereby participants reviewed the interview transcripts to verify the accuracy of their responses (Doyle, 2007), along with triangulation between interview data and documentary evidence, established credibility. Rich descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and research procedures were provided to support transferability, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. A transparent audit trail documenting participant recruitment, data collection, coding, and theme development throughout the study ensured dependability. Confirmability was strengthened by grounding interpretations in participants' interview accounts and documentary evidence, thereby ensuring that the findings reflected participants' experiences rather than the researcher's assumptions.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Four interrelated themes capturing participants' experience of using QuillBot for paraphrasing during thesis writing were revealed by this study. How participants initially integrated QuillBot into their thesis writing process, encountered the limitations of QuillBot's paraphrases, developed critical strategies for evaluating and revising QuillBot output, and strengthened their confidence in paraphrasing independently are revealed by these themes.

Experiencing the Use of Quillbot During Thesis Writing

Instead of using Quillbot as a stand-alone technological tool, participants described using it as a component of their thesis writing process. Across the interviews, they explained that Quillbot was typically used when they needed to paraphrase information from journal articles and other scholarly sources before incorporating it into their theses. Their experiences showed that writing itself did not begin with Quillbot. Rather, participants used Quillbot to help create an initial paraphrase after first reading and comprehending the original text. As a result, using Quillbot was integrated into their overall writing process, especially when they had trouble putting ideas into their own words.

The participants also described that Quillbot gradually became part of their writing routine as they progressed through different stages of thesis writing. Rather than interrupting their writing to manually reconstruct every sentence from the source text, they used Quillbot to produce an initial draft that allowed them to continue developing their arguments. P2 explained that

paraphrasing numerous citations manually often disrupted the continuity of writing, whereas QuillBot helped maintain the writing process.

“For thesis writing, it is definitely because we use a lot of quotations from various sources. Paraphrasing those quotations is very necessary because it is not possible to keep thinking of paraphrasing everything manually. So, having QuillBot really helps the writing process and makes it smoother, so I do not get stuck.”

P1 also mentioned that Quillbot decreased the effort required to start paraphrasing and enabled him to spend more time developing the content of his thesis rather than struggling with sentence formulation.

“It saves time. I can save energy because I don’t have to spend too much time thinking about how to structure my sentences.”

These accounts suggest that participants experienced QuillBot as a resource that supported the continuity of writing rather than as a tool that completed the writing task. Instead of replacing the cognitive work involved in paraphrasing, QuillBot enabled participants to overcome moments when they found it difficult to reformulate ideas from academic sources, allowing them to maintain momentum throughout the writing process.

Another shared experience concerned participants' interaction with complex academic texts. They clarified that manual paraphrasing was challenging because journal articles often had complex sentence structures and unfamiliar vocabulary. In these cases, participants were given an easier-to-understand alternative version by Quillbot before continuing to revise it. As P3 clarified,

“The result from QuillBot actually made me understand it even more, because QuillBot’s result is usually already neat, and the language is nicer to read compared to the original text, whose language can sometimes be really complicated.”

Rather than simply generating different wording, QuillBot became part of participants' experience of engaging with source texts. The generated text was described by participants as being used as a starting point for understanding and reformulating academic ideas before incorporating them into their own writing. This indicates that their experience of using QuillBot extended beyond producing paraphrases to supporting their engagement with academic literature during thesis writing.

These findings indicate that participants experienced QuillBot as a writing companion that supported the early stages of paraphrasing while preserving their role as active writers. Their accounts consistently show that QuillBot was integrated into the writing workflow to facilitate the transition from reading source materials to drafting paraphrases, rather than to replace the writing process itself. In this sense, participants experienced QuillBot as a tool that supported writing continuity and engagement with academic sources instead of functioning as an automatic producer of final academic texts.

Encountering the Limitation of Quillbot output

As participants continued using QuillBot throughout the thesis-writing process, situations in which the generated output did not always meet the linguistic and contextual requirements of academic writing were encountered by them. It was revealed by their experiences that, although the initial stage of paraphrasing was facilitated by QuillBot, careful examination was frequently required by the generated text before it could be incorporated into their theses. Rather than accepting the output as immediately usable, participants described repeatedly identifying lexical, grammatical, and semantic issues that needed further revision.

Inappropriate word choices were among the most frequently reported experiences. Participants explained that words were occasionally replaced by QuillBot with synonyms that were grammatically acceptable but contextually inappropriate for academic writing. As a result, both the original source and the generated output were often reread by them to determine whether the substituted words accurately conveyed the intended meaning. P1 described this experience as follows:

"Sometimes the words suggested by QuillBot are different from what I actually mean. They may sound similar, but they don't always fit the context of my thesis."

Similarly, P3 explained that although QuillBot usually generated readable sentences, certain lexical substitutions occasionally altered the intended meaning of the original text.

"There are times when the sentence looks better, but after I compare it with the original source, I realize that the meaning has changed a little."

These experiences suggest that participants did not view Quillbot's lexical substitutions as automatically appropriate. Instead, they continuously compared the generated output with the original source to make sure that the intended academic meaning was preserved.

Beside lexical problems participants had also problems in sentence construction and grammatical correctness. They said that sometimes Quillbot produced awkward sentences or grammatical construction that sounded unnatural in the context of academic writing. These problems were, although not experienced by all participants in every paraphrase, described as recurrent experiences that required further editing before the text could be integrated into their theses. Thus, using Quillbot did not remove the need for careful revision; rather it changed participants' focus from paraphrasing to evaluating and refining the output that it generated. Another common experience was the limitations of the free version of Quillbot. Users of the free version explained that limited paraphrasing modes, as well as daily usage, sometimes interrupted their writing flow. These technical constraints did not prevent them from using Quillbot but they did impact on how and when they used the tool during thesis writing.

Participants' experiences, overall, demonstrated that the limitations of Quillbot were not reasons to stop using the tool. Instead, these limitations became part of their everyday writing experience, encouraging them to be more careful with the generated output. Rather than seeing Quillbot as a source for ready-made academic text, participants increasingly understood that the output needed to be verified and refined before adding it to their writing.

Developing Critical Paraphrasing Practices When Using Output

Participants described a gradual change in their approach to paraphrasing in thesis writing after repeated experience with Quillbot. They experienced paraphrasing as an iterative process needing constant checking and revision, rather than accepting the output as a final product. Interviews repeatedly indicated that participants felt the cognitive work that was required for paraphrasing was not eliminated by Quillbot. Rather, the focus of their attention was shifted away from generating alternative sentences and towards determining whether the output generated correctly reflected the meaning of the original source. As participants became more familiar with Quillbot's strengths and limitations, they developed a routine of checking, revising, and refining the generated text before including it in their theses.

All participants shared the experience that they compared the output of Quillbot to the original source text. Participants described how they would continually refer back to the source article to check important concepts were retained. According to P2,

"I always compare the QuillBot result with the original article because sometimes the wording changes the meaning. If I only rely on QuillBot, I'm afraid the information will not be accurate."

Similarly, P3 explained that she rarely accepted the generated version immediately but usually modified it to make it more appropriate for academic writing.

"I rarely use the QuillBot result directly. Usually I still replace some words, rearrange the sentence, or rewrite parts of it so that it sounds more suitable for my thesis."

These experiences suggest that the participants were not passive users of the AI-generated text but active evaluators who constantly evaluated whether the generated paraphrase accurately represented the original meaning and conformed to the conventions of academic writing.

The participants' collective experiences show that paraphrasing with Quillbot was not a single-step activity, but an iterative process with a number of interconnected stages. As shown in Figure 2, participants first read and understood the source text, and then generated an initial paraphrase using Quillbot. Instead of copying the generated version into their theses, they critically evaluated the output by comparing it with the original source, checking the accuracy of meaning and its linguistic appropriateness. If the generated text was deemed inappropriate, participants re-edited the paraphrase to produce a final version for inclusion in their academic papers. The recursive arrows in the figure suggest that this evaluation-revision cycle was often repeated until the participants thought that the paraphrase was acceptable for use in their theses.

The document analysis (Table 1) provided additional support for the iterative process shown in Figure 1. In all three cases, the final versions were always different from the output of Quillbot. The participants did not merely make small linguistic corrections, but substantially changed the generated text before including it in their theses. For example, Participant 1 summarized information and reorganized ideas for a more concise explanation. Participant 2

rewrote the output into a standard academic citation, selectively incorporating information from the source text. Participant 3 rephrased the sentence to better convey the intended meaning and the rhetorical style of academic writing. These patterns suggest that participants did not simply edit isolated words or grammatical forms. Rather, they actively reconstructed Quillbot output to create paraphrases that better reflected their understanding of the source text and the conventions of academic writing.

Table 2: Examples of Participants' Revision of Quillbot Output

Participant	Original Text Source	QuillBot Output	Participant's Final Revision
P1	Ginting & Linarsih (2022): Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) represents the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, enabling teachers to transform subject matter into forms that are comprehensible and engaging for students, while considering their diverse abilities, interests, and learning needs.	Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) signifies the amalgamation of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, allowing educators to convert subject matter into accessible and engaging formats for students, while taking into account their varied abilities, interests, and learning requirements.	PCK is the amalgamation of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that teachers utilize to present subject matter in alignment with the abilities and interests of learners (Ginting & Linarsih, 2022).
P2	Abbasi et al. (2023): Individuals scoring high on openness to experience demonstrate a pronounced propensity to participate in creative endeavors and investigate unconventional concepts. This cognitive flexibility not only facilitates their adaptation to novel circumstances but has also been empirically established as a consistent predictor of creative achievement across diverse domains encompassing both artistic and scientific fields.	Individuals who score highly on openness to experience exhibit a strong inclination to engage in creative activities and research novel ideas. In addition to making it easier for them to adjust to new situations, this cognitive flexibility has been shown through empirical research to be a reliable indicator of creative success in a variety of fields, including both artistic and scientific.	According to (Abbasi et al., 2023), individuals high in openness are more likely to engage in creative activities and explore unconventional ideas, which enhances their ability to adapt to new situations. This trait has been consistently linked to creativity across various domains, including artistic and scientific fields.
P3	Chesla (2006): A good thesis statement is a strong, unambiguous assertion that reflects your perspective on the topic.	A strong, unambiguous assertion that reflects your point of view on the subject makes up a good thesis statement.	A strong and unambiguous assertion thesis statement reflects the author's perspective on the topic (Chesla, 2006).

The correspondence between the interview data and the document analysis suggests that participants perceived paraphrasing as a recursive process of meaning construction rather than a one-step technological activity. Even though Quillbot produced the initial version of the paraphrase, the participants were the ones to interpret the source text, assess the generated output, and reconstruct the final version before incorporating it into their theses. In this sense, the results of the document analysis support the participants' narratives by demonstrating that their reported revision practices are indeed reflected in their writing.



Evolving Paraphrasing Practice Through the Use of Quillbot

Participants stated that their experiences of using Quillbot had an impact on their approach to paraphrasing throughout the thesis writing process. They said that rather than becoming dependent on the tool, the repeated use of Quillbot helped them recognize patterns of academic writing, become more sensitive to effective paraphrasing techniques, and exercise more of their own judgment when rewriting source texts. The experiences suggest that the participants' practices of paraphrasing evolved as they became more familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of Quillbot over time.

Participants commonly reported that the repeated exposure to paraphrases generated by Quillbot helped them to recognize alternative ways to express academic ideas. Participants said that when they compared the original source, Quillbot output, and their own revised versions, they became more aware of how vocabulary choices, sentence structures, and academic expressions could be rephrased, while keeping the original meaning. P3 said:

"After using QuillBot many times, I began to understand different ways to rewrite sentences. Sometimes I could paraphrase by myself because I had seen similar patterns before."

Similarly, P2 described that QuillBot gradually became a learning resource rather than simply a paraphrasing tool.

"At first I depended on QuillBot, but over time I learned from the results. Eventually, I could decide which parts were appropriate and which needed to be rewritten."

These accounts indicate that participants did not experience Quillbot merely as a technology that generated alternative phrasing. Instead, by repeatedly interacting with the generated output, they were able to develop a better understanding of paraphrasing as an academic writing practice.

Another common experience was the gradual decline in the dependence on the Quillbot by the participants. According to the participants, they did not use Quillbot for every sentence as they became more familiar with academic writing conventions. Instead, they used the tool selectively for particularly difficult passages or unfamiliar academic expressions. Therefore, Quillbot went from being the main tool through which they made paraphrases to one of the tools that helped them in their writing process.

These experiences indicate that the participants' relationship with Quillbot changed over the course of writing the thesis. At first, it was essentially a language aide that helped them get the ball rolling on rephrasing. However, with repeated usage, participants relied more on their own understanding to evaluate, revise and reconstruct paraphrases before deciding whether or not to keep Quillbot's suggestions. The use of Quillbot therefore became not only a process of producing paraphrases but also a process of gradually developing greater autonomy in making paraphrasing decisions.



Discussion

The four themes generated in this study, taken together, indicate that participants' experience of using QuillBot for paraphrasing was not that of passive recipients of AI-generated text but of writers who actively mediated the tool's output through their own judgment at every stage of thesis writing. This section discusses these findings in relation to prior research and to the theoretical perspectives outlined earlier.

The finding that QuillBot became embedded in participants' everyday writing routine complements previous studies reporting that paraphrasing is made more manageable for students by QuillBot in academic writing (e.g., Fitria, 2021; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022; Thohir et al., 2024). However, whereas the perceived usefulness of QuillBot has primarily been highlighted by earlier studies, a process-oriented perspective is offered by the present study through illustrating how students experienced integrating QuillBot into their everyday thesis-writing practices. The findings suggest that the significance of QuillBot lies not merely in its ability to generate alternative wording but in how it becomes embedded within students' writing routines, supporting them in moving from reading scholarly sources to constructing their own academic texts.

Whereas earlier studies have mainly reported QuillBot's lexical and grammatical shortcomings as technological limitations in the abstract, the present study shows how students experienced these limitations during authentic thesis writing. The participants' accounts suggest that QuillBot's shortcomings did not only affect the quality of the generated text; they also shaped how the students engaged with the tool by prompting them to check, compare, and reconsider its output before using it. This repeated exposure to imperfect output appears, in turn, to have been one of the grounds for the more critical paraphrasing practices captured in the third theme.

The correspondence between the interview data and the document analysis further suggests that participants perceived paraphrasing as a recursive process of meaning construction rather than a one-step technological activity. Even though QuillBot produced the initial version of the paraphrase, it was the participants themselves who interpreted the source text, assessed the generated output, and reconstructed the final version before incorporating it into their theses; the document analysis supports their narratives by showing that these reported revision practices are indeed reflected in their actual writing. This finding provides a more comprehensive understanding of QuillBot than previous studies that have focused mainly on the tool's ability to support paraphrasing or writing efficiency (Fitria, 2021; Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022; Xuyen, 2023): the educational value of QuillBot appears to lie not in its provision of ready-made paraphrases, but in its capacity to prompt students' critical engagement with AI-produced output. This result supports Keck's (2006) claim that paraphrasing is fundamentally a matter of changing the form of ideas while preserving their meaning, and Shi's (2012) assertion that competent paraphrasing depends on understanding and rephrasing rather than simple word substitution. It is also consistent with the recommendation, discussed earlier, that AI-based paraphrasing tools should not be treated as a stand-alone solution: participants' value from QuillBot depended on their willingness to compare its output against the source and apply the paraphrasing strategies described by Bailey (2011), Sun & Yang (2015), and Keck (2006) themselves, rather than on the quality of the output alone. Building on these perspectives in the context of AI-assisted writing, the present study indicates that QuillBot functions most effectively when it complements, rather than



suppliants, students' critical engagement with source texts, with human judgment remaining at the core of the writing process even after repeated use of the tool.

Finally, the gradual shift from dependence on QuillBot toward more selective and autonomous use supports previous studies that found QuillBot can help boost students' confidence and develop their writing skills (e.g., Chanpradit, 2025; Xuyen, 2023). The present study extends this line of research by demonstrating how participants experienced incremental changes in their paraphrasing practices through repeated interaction with AI-generated text, rather than perceiving the outcome solely as an improvement in writing performance. This pattern is consistent with the recommendation made by Shi (2012) and Rogerson & McCarthy (2017) that AI-based paraphrasing tools function best not as a stand-alone solution but as a resource that writers learn to use critically over time, comparing generated output against the original source and gradually internalizing the paraphrasing strategies described by Bailey (2011), Sun & Yang (2015), and Keck (2006) rather than relying on the tool to perform these strategies on their behalf. In the present study, QuillBot was not used as a substitute for students' academic writing skills but as a resource that, when critically evaluated, encouraged participants to develop greater ownership of their paraphrasing over time.

D. CONCLUSION

EFL students' experiences of using QuillBot for paraphrasing during thesis writing were explored by this study. It is demonstrated by the findings that students' experiences extended beyond simply using an AI-assisted paraphrasing tool. Instead, a gradual process of integrating QuillBot into their thesis-writing practices, encountering the limitations of its output, developing critical paraphrasing practices, and refining the way they approached paraphrasing throughout the writing process was reflected by their experiences. Rather than functioning as an automatic solution for academic writing, QuillBot became part of a broader writing process in which AI-generated output was continuously interpreted, evaluated, revised, and reconstructed by students before being incorporated into their theses.

That participants consistently treated QuillBot output as an initial draft rather than a final academic product is a key finding of this study. It was revealed by their experiences that effective paraphrasing remained an active meaning-making process necessitating comparison with the original source, evaluation of contextual appropriateness, reconstruction of ideas, and adaptation to the rhetorical conventions of academic writing. These experiences were corroborated by the document analysis, which demonstrated that QuillBot-generated output was substantially modified by participants before being integrated into their final thesis drafts. These findings suggest that the educational value of QuillBot lies not primarily in generating alternative wording but in supporting students' critical engagement with source texts and AI-generated output throughout the paraphrasing process.

By shifting attention from the perceived usefulness of QuillBot to students' experiences of using the tool in authentic thesis-writing contexts, this study contributes to the growing body of research on AI-assisted writing. It is indicated by the findings that the effectiveness of AI-assisted writing tools depends not only on their technological capabilities but also on students' ability to critically evaluate, revise, and take responsibility for the generated output. Consequently, QuillBot should be viewed as a learning support tool that complements, rather than replaces, students' academic writing practices.

Important pedagogical implications for academic writing instruction are carried by these findings. Rather than discouraging or uncritically encouraging the use of AI-assisted writing tools, writing instructors should help students develop critical AI literacy by teaching them how to evaluate AI-generated output, preserve the intended meaning of source texts, and revise generated paraphrases in accordance with academic writing conventions. Such instructional support can promote responsible AI use while strengthening students' ownership of their academic writing.

The small number of participants and its focus on a single English Education program limit this study, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Participants from different disciplines, institutions, and levels of English proficiency may be involved in future studies to examine whether similar experiences emerge across contexts. A comparison of students' experiences of using different AI-assisted writing tools, or an investigation of instructional approaches that foster critical AI literacy in academic writing, may also be pursued by further research.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, S. (2011). *Academic writing: A handbook for international students* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Chanpradit, T. (2025). Generative artificial intelligence in academic writing in higher education: A systematic review. *Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology*, 9(4), 889–906. <https://doi.org/10.55214/25768484.v9i4.6128>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dewi, U., Hasanah, N., Julaika, S., & Sambas, E. C. M. (2024). Using QuillBot paraphraser in EFL writing: The effectiveness from students' perceptions. *English Education: English Journal for Teaching and Learning*, 12(1), 28–41. <https://doi.org/10.24952/ee.v12i01.11265>
- Doyle, S. (2007). Member checking with older women: A framework for negotiating meaning. *Health Care for Women International*, 28(10), 888–908. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399330701615325>
- Fitria, T. N. (2021). QuillBot as an online tool: Students' alternative in paraphrasing and rewriting of English writing. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 9(1), 183–196. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v9i1.10233>
- Howard, R. M., Serviss, T., & Tanya, K. (2010). Writing from Sources , Writing from Sentences. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 2(4), 177–192.
- Keck, K. (2006). The use of paraphrase in summary writing: A comparison of L1 and L2 writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15(4), 261–278. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2006.09.006>
- Kurniati, E. Y., & Fithriani, R. (2022). Post-graduate students' perceptions of QuillBot utilization in English academic writing class. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 7(3), 437–451. <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v7i3.852>



- Laila, N., & Daulay, E. (2024). Students' perception of using QuillBot to improve students' writing skills. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 10(2), 223–232. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v10i2.10083>
- Liao, M., & Tseng, C. (2010). Students' behaviors and views of paraphrasing and inappropriate textual borrowing in an EFL academic setting. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), 187–211.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 1986(30), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1427>
- Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2015). *Academic writing: An introduction*. Bloomsbury.
- Rogerson, A. M., & McCarthy, G. (2017). Using Internet based paraphrasing tools: Original work, patchwriting or facilitated plagiarism? *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 13, Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-016-0013-y>
- Shi, L. (2012). Rewriting and paraphrasing source texts in second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(2), 134–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2012.03.003>
- Sun, Y. C., & Yang, F. Y. (2015). Uncovering published authors' text-borrowing practices: Paraphrasing strategies, sources, and self-plagiarism. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 20, 224–236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2015.05.003>
- Syahnaz, M., & Fithriani, R. (2023). Utilizing artificial intelligence-based paraphrasing tool in EFL writing class: A focus on Indonesian university students' perceptions. *SCOPE: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(2), 210–218. <https://doi.org/10.30998/scope.v7i2.14882>
- Thohir, L., Udin, U., Isnaeni, M., & Putera, L. J. (2024). The effectiveness of integrating QuillBot for paraphrasing in writing instruction. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 12(4), 2112–2122. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i4.12780>
- Xuyen, N. T. (2023). Using the online paraphrasing tool QuillBot to assist students in paraphrasing the source information: English-majored students' perceptions. In T. T. Nghi (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 5th Conference on Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 21–27). AIJR. <https://doi.org/10.21467/proceedings.150.3>