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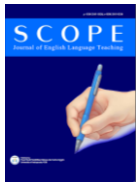

Research Article

Utilizing Artificial Intelligence-based Paraphrasing Tool in EFL Writing Class: A Focus on Indonesian University Students' Perceptions

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate students' perception of *QuillBot* utilization in an EFL academic writing course. This phenomenological case study involved 20 sixth-semester students majoring in English Education as the participants. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to all of the participants and face-to-face interviews with five participants who were purposefully selected based on their responses to the questions in the online questionnaire. The results of the data analysis reveal that the students exhibited positive responses toward the utilization of *QuillBot* in academic writing. Furthermore, they also find *QuillBot* beneficial for three reasons; first, it helps improve the content or argument; second, it minimizes grammatical errors, and third, it enhances the language used in their manuscripts. It could be concluded that integrating artificial intelligence such as online paraphrasing tools helps EFL students overcome some difficulties encountered in writing academic papers, and consequently improve their writing products. This study implies that the use of AI-based technology in language classrooms would be advantageous in a variety of ways; however, further research is required to determine the relative importance of each element regarding students' use of the AI-based paraphrasing tool, particularly *QuillBot*.

INTRODUCTION

In the academic context, students are expected to produce specific writing genres, such as summaries, essays, critical reviews, and research papers (Al-Khasawneh and Maher, 2010). Academic writing is one genre of writing that is frequently taught in higher education. English writing skills, particularly those required to produce an academic article, have always been regarded as among the most difficult to acquire it takes both problem-solving and the application of strategies to achieve communicative goals (Fithriani, 2018, 2019).

Even when English serves as a first language, the majority of native English speakers have difficulty producing academic essays (Sulaiman and Muhajir, 2019; Al Fadda, 2012). This struggle is undoubtedly magnified for students who are learning English as a second, foreign, or additional language. This is especially true for graduate students from non-Anglicized linguistic and cultural backgrounds who are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL),

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particularly Asian graduate students who find academic writing extremely challenging (Al Fadda, 2012).

There are many factors that make EFL students find academic writing challenging. According to Al Fadda (2012) writing style, motivation, anxiety overexpression, writer's block, and other emotional factors may all have an impact on an EFL learner's ability to write in academic English. In addition, the literacy backgrounds and experiences of EFL students in their native language are also very important in the development of their academic writing. Al Fadda (2012) defines academic writing as a mental and cognitive activity because it is a product of the mind. The image of a person working alone in a quiet environment has contributed to the perception of writing as a mental and cognitive activity. Consequently, writing an academic piece in a foreign language, in this case in the English language is often perceived to be difficult, particularly for EFL students. They frequently face more challenges and constraints in academic writing, such as the difficulty of creating clear and logical paragraphs, identifying the writing abilities required for success, and avoiding less effective words and phrases (Sulaiman and Muhajir, 2019).

One of the fundamentals of academic writing skills is the writers' ability to navigate potential sources to locate appropriate references and assess diverse ideas and options in order to build their own arguments (Sulaiman and Muhajir, 2019). Al-Khasawneh and Maher (2010) states that there are three key writing conventions: outlining, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Rephrasing is one of the components of academic writing that many students find challenging to do (Inayah and Sulistyaningrum, 2021; Ginting and Fithriani, 2022). This is a concern for all EFL students around the world, as many students mistakenly feel that changing a few words or the order of a sentence constitutes correct paraphrasing; failure to paraphrase appropriately will result in accusations of plagiarism. This issue is cross-disciplinary and of common interest to the entire academic community (Cortes-Vera, et. al., 2017), in Latin American universities, for instance, students are found to lack of skill to properly paraphrase in regards to academic plagiarism (Cortes-Vera, et. al. 2017).

A similar situation could also be observed in the Indonesian higher education context, where paraphrasing as a part of academic writing skills has recently been a topic of interest for a growing number of scholars (Fitria, 2022; Inayah and Sulistyaningrum, 2021; Ansorge, et, al., 2021; Akbar, 2020; Na and Mai, 2017; Kurniati and Fithriani, 2022). Students interpret paraphrase as the act of inserting a synonym, despite the fact that it is considered as the practice of textual borrowing. Therefore, it has an effect on the outcomes of paraphrasing, which should be viewed as the outcome of critical and analytical reading rather than the outcome of literary creation (Akbar, 2020).

Academic writing relies heavily on paraphrasing to indicate that students know what they have read and can support their viewpoints with appropriately recognized facts (Rogerson and McCarthy, 2017). EFL students as non-native English speakers find it difficult to gain skills in paraphrasing because they have fewer vocabulary resources and less awareness of complicated grammatical structures than native English speakers. They can learn to paraphrase effectively by reading widely, developing their general and academic vocabulary, and writing frequently (Dung, 2010),

Since paraphrasing skill creates some difficulties, researchers have attempted to find a solution to overcome this issue through technological sophistication (Inayah and Sulistyaningrum, 2021; Ginting and Fithriani, 2022; Fitria, 2022; Ansorge, et al., 2021; Bailey and Withers, 2018; Chen, et. al., 2013). Artificial intelligence-based technology is a popular modern trend in language classrooms, especially in writing classes (Ginting and Fithriani, 2022). Artificial intelligence (AI) enables machines to gain knowledge via experience, adapt to novel inputs, and carry out human-like activities. Powered by AI, new teaching and learning experiences in assessment, tutoring, content generation, and feedback for teachers and students can be created through technological advancements (Kurniati and Fithriani, 2022). In this case, AI-based technology is used to help students perform the task of paraphrasing, also known as a paraphrasing tool.

With the integration of AI-based technology in language classrooms students can check their writing (Ginting and Fithriani, 2022), besides that, Students can also use online paraphrasing tools to help them paraphrase more effectively. Online paraphrase tools can assist with a variety of tasks, such as detecting plagiarism (Ansorge, et. al., 2021) and text rewriting or text spinning. Spinning is a technique for generating a new text from an existing text by rewording it while avoiding the use of machine-based text-matching algorithms to identify plagiarism (Prentice and Kinden, 2018). With these features, students can utilize the tool to adjust word-matching algorithms by rewriting text from diverse sources (Sulistyaningrum, 2021).

QuillBot is one of the most frequently used online paraphrasing tools in writing classrooms (Kurniati and Fithriani, 2022). Founded in 2017 by three computer science students, this paraphrasing software has become one affordable paraphrasing tool that uses artificial intelligence to paraphrase any text (Fitria, 2021). *QuillBot*'s features, which have been continuously added to enhance the product's quality includes paraphrasing, summarizing, grammar checking, and plagiarism

checking. Empirical evidence has shown that this application has the benefit of saving time and quickly paraphrasing English sentences.

There are two available versions of *QuillBot*: free and premium. The free version has a character limit of 125 characters to be paraphrased at once. The premium one allows its users to increase the maximum character limit to 10,000. Another benefit of being a *QuillBot* premium user is the ability to paraphrase in any mode, including standard, fluency, formal, simple, creative, expand, and shorten. In comparison, *QuillBot*'s free version only offers the standard and fluency modes.

Many studies have looked into using paraphrasing tools to help students overcome paraphrasing challenges in writing class. Sulistyaningrum (2021), for example, investigated the use of paraphrasing tools to overcome students' paraphrasing difficulties in writing literature reviews. The results reveal numerous benefits of utilizing online paraphrasing tools. Another study was conducted by Chen, et. al. (2013) who developed a corpus-based paraphrasing tool to improve EFL learners' writing skills. The results show that their online corpus-based paraphrasing tool called PREFER could provide significant support for EFL students who have paraphrasing difficulty to meet their writing demands and improve EFL learners' writing skills. The other study is conducted by Fitria (2021) who focused on reviewing the using *QuillBot* as an AI tool system for teachers and students in paraphrasing and rewriting English writing both in free and premium versions.

The great majority of the currently available research has concentrated on determining the linguistic challenges faced by EFL learners when attempting to paraphrase or on the utilization of paraphrasing tools available online for students. These studies, on the other hand, have paid less attention to the voices and views of undergraduate learners on the use of *QuillBot* in their academic writing and the benefits that may be obtained by using *QuillBot*. In light of the previous context, the purpose of this research is to investigate the use of *QuillBot*, which is more popularly known as a software assistant, in order to provide students with assistance in paraphrasing the work they have produced. It is also possible to utilize this technology to prevent being discovered by originality-checking tools such as Turnitin®. According to the findings of the study conducted by Kirtland, et. al. (2012), the utilization of web-based tools can be a good resource for the affectivity of writing skills.

Due to this gap in the literature, we decided to look into this topic by focusing our investigation on students' experiences with *QuillBot* utilization in an academic writing course for undergraduate students. This study specifically addresses two research questions:

1. What are students' Perceptions of *QuillBot* utilization in academic writing?
2. What benefits did the students find in using *QuillBot* in paraphrasing their writing academic?

METHOD

This study sought to determine how students perceive the use of *QuillBot* in an academic writing course. To achieve the study's research questions, a phenomenological case study was adopted. A phenomenological case study can explain and analyze students' experiences by establishing the relevance of these experiences as felt by the participants and the experience of an activity or concept as viewed through the eyes of specific participants (Ary, et. al, 2010).

This study engaged 20 Indonesian university students majoring in English language education in the fifth semester who have passed the Academic Writing course. The technique used in determining the participants was the purposive sampling technique. The purpose of this sampling was to get the individual that can give more information and detailed description to help researchers answer the research questions (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle, 2010). Therefore, in this study, their preferences for the use of *QuillBot* in their academic writing were determined.

This study collected data using a closed-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaires were adapted with minor modifications from Tsai's (2020) study to investigate the students' perceptions of *QuillBot* utilization when paraphrasing their manuscripts. One example of a modification is the omission of certain questions deemed unsuitable for this study (the original questionnaire contains eight questions regarding students' perceptions of using Google Translate; however, in this study, we used only six questions to investigate students' perceptions of *QuillBot*). The questionnaire requires participants to respond as Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), or Strongly Disagree (1). A semi-structured interview was used to get more information from students on the use of *QuillBot* in academic writing.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face. The duration of the interviews ranged from 20 to 35 minutes, with an average of approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were recorded with audio-recorded and transcribed in the participants' native language, with minor editing to remove repetitions, slips of the tongue, and unnecessary details. Unless stated otherwise, the selected quotations were translated into English, while preserving the original meaning to the maximum extent and the translated

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quotations were then checked for accuracy by the researcher.

The thematic analysis is the most common in a qualitative study to explore interviewees' responses (Braun and Clarke 2016; Guest, et. al., 2012). The researchers transcribed the audio files and analyzed them using thematic analysis. This analysis is directed at analytic, exploratory, and recording patterns within data that draw attention to the prominence of planned and well-thought-out dataset descriptions.

The frequency count was used to calculate the total number of responses associated with students' perspectives in utilizing *QuillBot* as a paraphrasing tool to improve their academic writing quality. Meanwhile, thematic content analysis was applied to the data collected through interviews to identify clear trends from various perspectives. To fully understand and analyze the participants' experiences and perspectives, the data were sequenced, labeled, and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

QuillBot Utilization in EFL Academic Writing

The data to answer the first research question was collected through the questionnaire's closed-ended section; the respondents were required to answer the questionnaire to provide their views on the utilization of *QuillBot* in academic writing. All 20 students completed the section on views on *QuillBot*. The findings indicate that *QuillBot* is one of the paraphrasing tools that they find very beneficial for paraphrasing their academic work, with high replies that strongly agree or agree with each statement. (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the survey questionnaires

No	Statements	SA	A	N	SD	D
1	Generally, I use *QuillBot* to paraphrase my writing.	85%	10%	5%	0%	0%
2	There are many features in *QuillBot* that are very useful for improving my writing skill.	60%	35%	5%	0%	0%
3	Using *QuillBot* help me to improve my grammar skill.	30%	50%	20%	0%	0%
4	Using *QuillBot* help me to increase my vocabulary.	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
5	Using *QuillBot* help me in the use of proper language for paraphrasing my writing.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
6	I can write confidently and get better results of paraphrasing from my writing by using *QuillBot.*	50%	40%	10%	0%	0%

SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; N= Neutral; SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree

Students generally use *QuillBot* to paraphrase their writing. They found that it significantly benefited them in better paraphrasing results in their academic writing. Students feel that it helps them improve their grammatical skills, increase their vocabulary mastery, and may help them use proper language in their academic writing to boost their confidence in producing academic writing. This clarify what Kirtland, et. al. (2012) state that the utilization of web-based tools can be a good resource for the affectivity of writing skills.

Most of the analytical results were comparable; however, there were several noticeable differences. Whereas most students strongly agree with statements one and two, just one individual responded neutrally. For the third and fourth statements, the highest percentage is for the "agree" option, which for the "strongly agree" option is both at 30%. The fifth statement has the same percentage of strongly agreeing and agreeing 40%, and for the last statement, most students strongly agree 50% with the statement that using *QuillBot* can make them write confidently in their academic writing.

For all the statements generally, the respondents exhibited positive responses towards the utilization of *QuillBot* in academic writing, as none of them disagreed or strongly disagreed with those statements in the survey questionnaire. These results support the statements of several researchers who say that online paraphrasing tools can help overcome the difficulties of paraphrasing English students in their writing (Sulistyaningrum, 2021; Chen et al., 2013; Inayah and Sulistyaningrum, 2021).

The Perceived Benefits of *QuillBot* for Students

To answer the second research question regarding the benefits students perceive from using *QuillBot* as an online paraphrasing tool to paraphrase academic writings, an analysis of the data gathered through the interview section revealed three major themes, which are presented below:

Theme 1: Improved Content/Argument of Manuscript

Paraphrasing or restating a passage text with different words, or even rearranging the sentence structure, is a skill that English learners must develop in order to participate in academic classes and daily conversation (Chen, et. al., 2013). In paraphrasing academic writings, one of the main things that must be focused on is the content or argument of the article. Many theories are quoted to strengthen a statement in academic writing, and the content of academic writing is a major concern because the essence of paraphrasing is that it can change the meaning of the theory from expert statements to our language based on the understanding we have, and this is one of the difficulties that many students face. And this statement is supported by the student's admission in the following:

> *One of the most difficult things to paraphrase is sentences or statements from experts because we need a broad and deep understanding as well as a large vocabulary to be able to replace and paraphrase our writing, and QuillBot is very helpful for that because besides being easy and fast, it also saves time and can implement new vocabulary that we rarely hear or use. (Student 1)*

Using *QuillBot's* paraphrasing tools has various advantages; one of them is that it can save time when writing because *QuillBot*'s paraphrasing tool employs cutting-edge artificial intelligence to recreate a sentence, paragraph, or article (Fitria, 2021). *QuillBot* may help the writer improve their writing quickly by deleting unnecessary words and supporting them in conveying a clear message.

> *The purpose of paraphrasing my academic writing is to avoid plagiarism, and of course, the main thing that I paraphrase is the content of my writing, whether it is changing words or changing active sentences into passive or vice versa, and as long as I use this QuillBot, I am very helpful in that, besides being fast and accurate, it can also make it easier for me to compose the next sentence. (student 2)*

One of the various techniques that may be used to paraphrase text is to change the sentence, for example, from active to passive or vice versa, as one of the above students did. According to Sulistyaningrum (2021), one of the most challenging elements of paraphrasing their writing is turning passive sentences into active sentences or vice versa. This assertion is reinforced by several student comments, who find the *QuillBot* program incredibly useful. And according to the student, *QuillBot* is very helpful in this regard because most *QuillBot* paraphrases sentences by changing them from active to passive or vice versa. As a result, students agreed that *QuillBot* is beneficial to their writing.

> *QuillBot helps my writing, especially academic writing. We can correct vocabulary in academic writing because academic writing and general writing are different, and in QuillBot we can choose features that we want language mode to apply to our writing. The feature of selecting the mode of paraphrase in QuillBot makes it easier for me to know what kind of paraphrase I get from QuillBot. I tend to choose fluency mode when I want to paraphrase my academic writing. (Student 4)*

As we all know, free users could only enjoy the standard and fluency modes of the application. Meanwhile, premium users get access to all modes, which include formal, simple, creative, expand, and shorten. *QuillBot* users who do not have a premium version prefer fluency mode over standard mode for their writing since fluency prioritizes making text look natural and maintaining good English grammar. This mode only modifies the text slightly, yet it effectively keeps the original meaning (Fitria, 2021).

According to all the students' statements above, *QuillBot* is very useful for those who write academically as a habit or an obligation as a task in their university; therefore, *QuillBot* is very useful in many ways, including avoiding plagiarism, making it easier for them to compose the next sentence, and incorporating new vocabulary into their writing. There are also additional modes that we may select to determine the mode of our writing.

Theme 2: Improved Grammar of the Manuscript

QuillBot is an online application that helps writers paraphrase their work, avoid plagiarism, summarize long phrases, and improve their grammar for improved clarity and a more polished appearance. *QuillBot,* in addition to being able to paraphrase sentences, can also detect and improve grammar (Fitria, 2021).

QuillBot is an application that can simultaneously detect structures such as adjusting punctuation marks, achieve better grammar, and make it easier to use the right tenses because the things mentioned above are difficulties that are typically experienced by students in their writing (Inayah

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and Sulistyaningrum, 2021). Therefore, in addition to being helpful for paraphrasing statements or sentences found in academic writing, *QuillBot* is also helpful for enhancing the grammar structure of academic writing, as evidenced by the following statements from students:

> *QuillBot has a lot of benefits that I can use. QuillBot can also identify grammar and the sensible use of tenses, but I'll still double-check it because it can occasionally be inaccurate. Moreover, I believe my writing's grammar structure is better after being paraphrased by QuillBot. (Students 2)*

Considering using an internet tool to verify things like grammar and the rules of grammar cannot be completely trusted, students who utilize *QuillBot* will keep re-checking their writers' usage of grammar. When they used *QuillBot*, they found mistakes in their grammar, and some of the students said they would reread their work to make sure the grammar was correct.

> *I once found grammatical mistakes or improper punctuation in my writing after I used QuillBot to paraphrase it, but behind all of that, I still trust QuillBot as a tool to paraphrase my writing because all those mistakes only happen once in a while because all these errors only happen occasionally, so that's why I keep checking after I paraphrase my writing using QuillBot, but overall, QuillBot helps me in paraphrasing my academic writing. (Student 3)*

But the rest of the people who took part almost completely believed in *QuillBot's* grammar, as shown below:

> *I fully trust the grammatical structure of QuillBot because sometimes I also don't know which tenses are more appropriate for the sentence considering that English is not my native language, so in many ways, QuillBot really helps me in paraphrasing my academic writing. Consequently, this boosts my confidence in my writing.(Student 4)*

Based on the explanations of the students above, there are various advantages to utilizing *QuillBot*, such as the fact that it can help them use correct grammar. Because these students are aware of the fact that English is not their native language, they feel unconfident about their grammar abilities. As a result, students have enhanced self-confidence since they can write without worry or discomfort regarding grammatical errors. But there are also certain disadvantages that we must be aware of when using *QuillBot* due to its improper usage of grammar.

Theme 3: Improved Language Use of Paraphrasing in the Manuscript

The language that is used in academic writing is another aspect that must be properly considered because it will impact the article's quality. The use of appropriate language can transfer the meaning of what the speaker or writer is saying, and vice versa; if the language is not used appropriately, it will result in misunderstanding. Therefore, in paraphrasing, the use of language also requires consideration.

> *The language used in QuillBot when paraphrasing is good because it occasionally uses word connectors and parts of speech, and I think the sentences paraphrased by QuillBot are also easy to understand. QuillBot also uses appropriate vocabulary and provides a choice of words that we can replace with others that we believe better suit our writing. (Student 1)*

Another method is to rearrange the words. Sometimes word additions or deductions are required when rearranging the sequence of words so that the phrase still follows the appropriate rules. In a complex sentence, rearranging the clauses is the simplest approach to changing the word order. Paraphrasing may also be defined as the act of rearranging the sequence of words in a phrase as well as the use of synonyms or synonyms in combination (Fitria, 2021).

> *Another useful thing about QuillBot is that it usually provides synonyms that we can choose for ourselves as the choice of words that we think are the most suitable for our writing because QuillBot typically paraphrases by switching active to passive sentences and switching words using synonyms, all of which are very helpful to avoid plagiarism. (Student 3)*

Synonyms are two words that have the same meaning or connotation. It is possible to modify the meaning of a phrase by changing a few words. This is the most fundamental form of paraphrasing. The use of appropriate synonyms is important because two words might have meanings that appear similar but are different. Some terminology must be changed when paraphrasing, but not all of it. As a result, it is essential to identify which words or phrases cannot be modified (Chin, et. al., 2012).

> *Another reason for me why QuillBot is very useful in my academic writing is that the use of language in paraphrasing academic writing in QuillBot is also good, because QuillBot provides the*

> *language modes we want to use to paraphrase our writing, such as fluent, standard, formal, etc., so that I have the opportunity to change the language usage as I wish. In addition, there are color markings such as orange, yellow, and blue, which mean that the colored word can be changed, so if I think the vocabulary is not suitable or too difficult, I can choose another one. That's why we have to double-check everything we paraphrase; do not use it directly in our writing; do not directly copy it; but read first; if there is a word that doesn't fit, we can replace it with another word because there will be choices. (Student 5)*

Students find *QuillBot* to be very beneficial because of the language it uses to paraphrase their writing, such as switching active sentences to passive ones or changing words to synonyms, which is very useful to avoid plagiarism. Furthermore, it supports Fitria's research on *QuillBot*'s use as an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool system for students to paraphrase and rewrite English-language writing, which discovered that: "the findings show that *QuillBot*'s text-paraphrasing tools employ a variety of techniques, such as using equations or synonyms, changing the word's form, using active or passive sentences, and changing the order of words in sentences" (Fitria, 2021).

The findings indicated that using *QuillBot* could help students overcome paraphrasing difficulties in academic writing. However, ensuring proper grammar usage was a significant result of using *QuillBot* in academic writing. The *QuillBot* could also help students paraphrase the right sentences and use the right tense. It could also help them rewrite the source text as a paraphrase in a different style and change the words in the source text.

This finding explains why *QuillBot*, as a tool for paraphrasing writing, is especially helpful for learners and may help them overcome obstacles in paraphrasing their work. They feel more confident about their writing because they can use *QuillBot*'s facilities and conveniences, such as the fact that they can quickly paraphrase the contents of their writing without worrying about grammatical structure errors or their limited vocabulary knowledge. *QuillBot* can also help students avoid plagiarism. As we know, if students are capable, they can do this paraphrasing manually to achieve a higher standard of quality, but if they are pressed for time, paraphrasing tools can help them. The paraphrasing tool can not only help them improve the overall tone of their writing and avoid repetition, but also help us avoid plagiarism, which is very important if we want to use the same content online (Fitria, 2022).

Furthermore, employing *QuillBot* might be a wonderful alternative for training students to enhance their writing abilities in an engaging way. Students should examine paraphrasing processes because internet paraphrasing programs do not fully comprehend the entire essay.

CONCLUSION

This present study showed that all the participants agreed that using *QuillBot* could improve their academic writing. All 20 students encountered *QuillBot's* benefits in three aspects: content, grammar, and language use. In terms of the content of the *QuillBot* manuscript, it is useful for students in paraphrasing sentences, theories, or expert statements. In terms of grammar, *QuillBot* can sometimes correctly use tenses and other aspects related to the structure of grammar, but it can't always be relied upon. Lastly, in terms of language use in paraphrasing in the manuscript, according to students, *QuillBot* is trustworthy and easy to understand, and there is also a choice of words that we can choose from and change to fit our writing.

Additionally, the *QuillBot* assisted in changing the source text's sentence structure, switching from active to passive voice, and finding synonyms for paraphrasing. Even though some source texts could not be completely accurately paraphrased, *QuillBot* was still good and useful enough to be used, according to respondents, especially for those with limited English language proficiency. Because *QuillBot* cannot read or comprehend text competently, students should use the tools in conjunction with critical thinking and teacher instruction.

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