



Investigating Perceptions of Online Paraphrasing Tools among English-Majored Students at Sai Gon University in Learning Academic Writing

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Abstract

English academic writing, especially scientific reports, is difficult due to many problems. In particular, many researchers found that a large number of students are still unable to effectively paraphrase English texts, as shown by the fact that the majority of the sources are almost exactly repeated in the students' work, leading to unintentional plagiarism. To address the lack of paraphrasing skill, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can provide students with great assistance. Therefore, this study aims to investigate Sai Gon University students' perceptions towards online paraphrasing tools and recommend some ways to avoid plagiarism in learning academic writing. The data from 100 random English-majored seniors were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed positive perceptions of students towards the utilization of online paraphrasing tools in learning academic writing. Most of them found these tools beneficial for their improvement in paraphrasing skill. Based on the data collected, the study recommends some useful and appropriate ways to avoid plagiarism by using AI tools in their writing.

Keywords: *AI tools, paraphrase, perception, plagiarism, writing*

INTRODUCTION

At the present time, English has become one of the most popular languages around the world. There are four skills that all language learners have to practice to use the language effectively: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When it comes to learning English, especially in the context of higher education, academic writing is one specific area that is getting much attention from many researchers. According to Asmara and Kastuhandani (2024), unlike writing a narrative, novel, or descriptive text, academic writing necessitates a higher level of complexity and organization from students. Likewise, Sarair et al. (2019) stated that academic writing is difficult because there are so many factors to consider. Scientific papers, one kind of academic writing, have to be written in a way that is easily understood by readers and must be supported by facts and data from earlier studies. In addition, learners also need to be able to quote and paraphrase concepts from previous research, which can be challenging because there is a chance for misinterpretation. However, Injai (2015) and Keck (2006, as cited in Sarair et al., 2019) found that many students are still unable to properly paraphrase the English texts, as evidenced by the fact that most of the sources are almost exactly duplicated in their work, which results in unintentional plagiarism.

To address the lack of paraphrasing skill, AI can provide students with valuable help (Asmara & Kastuhandani, 2024). "One of the most important goals for AI is to design

automated devices that can analyse the environment and do a task as humans do” (Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022, p. 440). In recent years, several studies have claimed the benefits of online paraphrasing tools, such as QuillBot, Grammarly, and ChatGPT, in studying academic writing.

Based on the context and the aforementioned problems of the topic, this study sought to address two research questions:

- 1) To what extent do English-major students at Sai Gon University perceive the utilization of online paraphrasing tools in learning academic writing?
- 2) How can students utilize online paraphrasing tools to avoid plagiarism in learning academic writing?

By examining students’ perceptions towards the use of online paraphrasing tools, this study may help enhance the integration of them into the teaching practices for English academic writing. Accordingly, university instructors and students can make more informed decisions about the use of some online paraphrasing tools. Moreover, this study is expected to contribute to the broader understanding of AI's role in supporting students’ learning and provide a valuable reference for future researchers interested in exploring the integration of technology, academic writing, and students’ learning, especially in the Vietnamese higher education context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic writing

According to Geyte (2013), the term “academic writing” can be introduced as writing that is created by scholars – either academics or students – for reading by other scholars. It can appear in various formats, including reports from group projects, dissertations, textbooks, journal articles, etc. To be more specific, Bui et al. (2022) stated that academic writing is a kind of text in which the author discusses a particular subject or conveys their point of view through an in-depth analysis grounded in recognized theories, along with recommendations for how to deal with the issue. In simpler terms, academic writing is “what scholars do to communicate with other scholars in their fields of study, their disciplines” (Greene & Lidinsky, 2014, p. 1). However, academic writing is not only a way of communication but also a technique for introspection, analysis, and cognition. It supports students to acquire habits of mind related to disciplines and to deliberate on their own mental processes (Columbia University, 2014).

According to Whitaker (2009), there are many different kinds of academic writing, such as essays, research papers, argumentative papers, or analysis papers, but they all have the same goals and principles. Additionally, Cribb (2002) also stated that the research paper – also referred to as a “term paper” – is a typical assignment in university courses and is frequently assigned as an alternative to the traditional exam by the teacher. Prathap et al. (2019) defined “A research paper is piece of academic writing based on its author’s original research work on a particular topic and the analysis and interpretation of research findings” (p. 488).

In order to gather the related information, a variety of articles, books, journals, and newspapers are referred to when conducting research. A research paper is made through these collected materials (Shrestha et al., 2021). However, some students may purposefully incorporate entire passages from outside sources into their work without citations. In addition, others will purchase research papers from friends or digital sources. These deliberate acts of academic dishonesty are the most apparent forms of plagiarism (Lester &

Lester, 2015). Lester and Lester (2015) also stated that “Plagiarism is defined as the act of claiming the words or ideas of another person as your own” (p. 23). According to Bloch (2012), plagiarism continues to be an extremely contentious problem in debates involving almost every kind of writing.

Paraphrasing

Burch (2007) stated that when an idea is conveyed in the same language but with different words, it is called paraphrasing. In other words, Fitria (2022) explained that the act of paraphrasing involves expressing a concept or idea in a different way without weakening or overstating the source material. To be more specific, Injai (2015) provided a general definition of paraphrasing, which is “a process of rewriting, restating, rewording or even rephrasing of sentences that convey the meaning as equal as in the original; the paraphrased sentences are semantically equivalent but syntactically different” (p. 10). Most importantly, paraphrasing is also taken into consideration as an alternative to prevent plagiarism (Gardner, 1999; Injai, 2015; Chi and Nguyen, 2017; Virisi et al., 2022).

Even though the majority of students, particularly those in higher education, have studied English since elementary school, they still struggle to convey their views in English, especially when writing for academic purposes (Abas & Aziz, 2016). Masniyah (2017) also claimed that rewriting the original language and changing a work's original sentence structure is highly challenging for students. Furthermore, Bui et al. (2022) suggested that most pupils find it difficult to master this ability because they do not have enough vocabulary. One more reason shown by Sarair et al. (2019) is that the students do not fully comprehend the text's meaning. They just alter a word's synonym or antonym without understanding the meaning the author intended to express. Especially, in terms of scientific writing, the lack of paraphrasing skill is an issue that should worry all EFL students worldwide, because many of them believe that simply altering a few words or a sentence's structure makes for acceptable paraphrasing (Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023). However, the researchers also emphasized that improper paraphrasing can lead to plagiarism accusations.

Types of paraphrasing and paraphrasing strategies

To understand thoroughly about paraphrasing skill, apart from its definitions, it is highly recommended to pay close attention to the types of paraphrasing and paraphrasing strategies. In recent years, many researchers have dedicated themselves to providing language learners and instructors with deep insights into these aspects of paraphrasing skill in order to help them produce appropriate and effective paraphrases in their writing. Most of the researchers found that there are three main types of paraphrasing that learners frequently use: semantic paraphrase, syntactic paraphrase, and organization paraphrase (Barreiro, 2008; Du, 2013; Injai, 2015; Masniyah, 2017). However, many different paraphrasing strategies are varying from one researcher to another. In this study, all collected strategies from those linguistic scholars have been synthesized below to make it more comprehensive.

Semantic paraphrase refers to changing words in the original sentence to make a paraphrase. There are some common strategies used in this type of paraphrase, such as using synonyms, changing word forms, changing number and percentage. When it comes to using synonyms, Barreiro (2008) and Du (2013) both found that it is one of the most obvious, straightforward, and favourite strategies of paraphrasing among the participants. Barreiro

(2008) defined “synonym refers to a word with an identical or similar meaning, such as the verbs ‘buy’ and ‘purchase’, where both pairs have the same part-of-speech or syntactic category” (p. 30). However, Hirst (2003) stated that absolute synonyms are scarce since most of them are near-synonyms. Barreiro (2008) also mentioned a near-synonym as a word or phrase that means not exactly the same as another, but almost the same. As regards changing word forms, Masniyah (2017) explained that “If the sentence uses a noun, you can rewrite the sentence to use the verb or adjective form of the word” (p. 18). Du (2013) said that students can make more considerable linguistic changes in their paraphrases when they alter word forms because, unlike the use of synonyms, which can lead to word-for-word local changes, word form changes are frequently accompanied by sentence structure changes. The last common strategy of semantic paraphrase is changing number and percentage, which is about “how to replace a value in the original sentence with a number or a percentage form by preserving the equivalent value” (Injai, 2015, p. 16).

Injai (2015) defined “syntactic paraphrase is the paraphrase that involves with changing structure and grammar of the original texts” (p. 14). Similarly, Barreiro (2008) also claimed that “At sentence level, paraphrasing often implies reorganization of the syntactic structure of the original sentence” (p. 31). In this type, writers can paraphrase by changing word order, changing active to passive, changing positive to negative, separating long sentences, combining short sentences, expanding phrases for clarity, or condensing phrases for conciseness. Regarding changing word order, this strategy requires the writer to change the order of clauses when the original sentence has more than one clause (Injai, 2015). In addition, it is sometimes necessary to alter the wording of the parts of the sentence to make sure that the paraphrase is grammatically appropriate (Masniyah, 2017). Changing active to passive or vice versa means transforming an active voice sentence into its passive form or transforming a passive voice sentence into its active form to maintain native fluency without making a change to the semantic roles of the original sentences (Barreiro, 2008; Injai, 2015). In research writing, changing active to passive also helps to keep the focus on the key information rather than the original subject, thus enhancing the objectiveness of the study. Concerning changing positive to negative, it is about how to change a positive expression into a negative form, or vice versa. Writers can also paraphrase by separating long sentences, which is the way of breaking up long, complex sentences into smaller ones. On the contrary, combining short sentences together is another way to paraphrase in writing. As to expanding phrases for clarity, it is the strategy used when writers clarify some phrases in the original sentences to make them more understandable. Conversely, the last strategy of syntactic paraphrase is condensing phrases for conciseness, which is “the way of restating some phrases into a short form” (Injai, 2015, p. 15). This paraphrasing strategy may help to maintain a focused, efficient style that is appropriate for academic and scientific contexts.

According to Injai (2015) and Masniyah (2017), organization paraphrase is the type of paraphrase that involves altering the structure or the order of the ideas inside the whole paragraph. However, after carrying out a preliminary study, Injai (2015) found that this type of paraphrasing was used by very few participants.

Online paraphrasing tools

According to Raheem et al. (2023), academic writing is one of the areas in language learning that has witnessed a significant shift in recent years with the advent of AI applications. As a result, these days, students may utilize automated paraphrasing tools to help with academic

writing. According to several studies, the advantages of these tools are undeniable, as Malon et al. (2024) recommended “When developing writing skills, students should make use of paraphrasing tools” (p. 538). These tools are software or digital applications that modify the original writing's structure while keeping its meaning unchanged through the use of algorithms (Alammar & Amin, 2023). Raheem et al. (2023) also stated that “AI-powered tools such as QuillBot, Grammarly, and ChatGPT have emerged as influential assets, offering innovative solutions to enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and overall quality of English academic writing” (p. 600).

Mohammad et al. (2024a) examined how English as a foreign language teachers and students felt about utilizing QuillBot to enhance their paraphrasing skill. 115 students and 44 teachers were chosen for the study using a descriptive survey. In addition, a semi-structured interview with 13 students was conducted. It was shown that regardless of gender, role, or study level, QuillBot greatly improved the paraphrasing skill of both teachers and students.

Regarding ChatGPT, Emran et al. (2024) investigated how university students might enhance their academic writing abilities, including task focus, language, accuracy, and appropriateness by ChatGPT's paraphrasing function. 68 students were split into experimental and control groups in a quasi-experimental study design. While the experimental group was being trained to use ChatGPT, the control group was being exposed to conventional teaching. Results showed that the program with the experimental group improved students' academic writing skills, and recommendations for further studies were presented.

According to Ho (2023), a short paragraph from Purdue Online Writing Lab was utilized as a sample to assess the two free paraphrasing tools, QuillBot and ChatGPT. Results showed that QuillBot frequently failed to accurately paraphrase original content, which led to plagiarism. On the other hand, although ChatGPT performed its advanced capabilities to generate more natural-sounding writing, it still had flaws such as providing non-existent sources and inaccurate citations.

A study conducted by Lazic et al. (2020) explored how students perceived Grammarly, a premium version of Automated Writing Evaluation, as an additional teaching tool to assist in teaching and supporting writing from sources. The study was conducted with 37 second-year students from a Japanese public university. Following in-class exercises designed to teach summarizing, synthesizing, and paraphrasing, students answered a survey measuring their opinions. Grammarly was deemed by students to be a constructive teaching tool that can help with avoiding plagiarism and writing from sources.

According to Ginting et al. (2023), with open-ended questionnaires and interview techniques, eighth-semester students in North Sumatra, Indonesia, who utilized QuillBot and Grammarly for writing assignments, demonstrated a positive attitude towards AI. Although the tools reduce project time, aid with paraphrasing, and analyse grammar structures, students still express concerns about cyber security. To completely grasp AI's potential advantages, further research is required.

Based on these previous studies, QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly are beneficial to students in overcoming writing difficulties, especially paraphrasing skill. However, very little research has investigated Vietnamese students' attitudes towards them as online paraphrasing tools and how the students may utilize them to avoid plagiarism in writing. Additionally, little literature is available on the comparison of three applications in the aspect of their paraphrasing feature specifically. In order to fill these empirical gaps, this study aims

to determine how English-majored students at Sai Gon University perceive the utilization of online paraphrasing tools and how students can utilize them to avoid plagiarism in learning academic writing.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study applied a quantitative research design to investigate Sai Gon University English-majored students' perceptions towards the utilization of online paraphrasing tools in learning academic writing. A survey research strategy was chosen to collect data. According to Ary et al. (2010), "The survey permits you to gather information from a large sample of people relatively quickly and inexpensively" (p. 378). They also mentioned two basic data-gathering techniques in the survey, which are interviews and questionnaires. Therefore, using the survey strategy can help collect and analyse students' experiences in utilizing online paraphrasing tools in learning academic writing.

Context of the study

As mentioned above, scientific papers have to be written in a way that is easily understood by readers and must be supported by facts and data from earlier studies. Furthermore, students must be able to paraphrase and quote ideas from previous research, which can be difficult because there is a potential for misunderstanding. Nevertheless, many students are still unable to effectively paraphrase English texts, as shown by the fact that the majority of the sources are almost exactly repeated in their work, leading to unintentional plagiarism. Thus, some AI-powered paraphrasing tools have become popular among learners since they can help to enhance learners' paraphrasing skill. Numerous researchers have focused on examining the effectiveness of these technologies, particularly QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly, and have produced considerable findings for future research. These earlier investigations still leave significant empirical gaps. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine how Sai Gon University English-majored students perceive the use of online paraphrasing tools and how students can utilize them to avoid plagiarism in learning academic writing.

Participants

To fulfill the objectives of the study, a purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. The study engaged 100 senior students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Sai Gon University who had gone through the Research Methodology and Research Writing modules. The reason for this criterion is to ensure the selected participants' familiarity with the use of online paraphrasing tools in their academic writing.

Research instruments

The study's data were collected from two sources: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was adapted and developed from many other researchers' works, including Kurniati and Fithriani (2022), Cheng (2023), Ginting et al. (2023), Asmara and Kastuhandani (2024), and Mohammad et al. (2024b). The questionnaire was divided into two main parts. The first part asked the participants two preliminary questions about the frequency of using online paraphrasing tools and their preferred online paraphrasing tool in writing a research paper. In the second part, there were three sections with twenty-eight

statements about their chosen tool's paraphrasing strategies, effectiveness, and disadvantages. They were all rating questions using the five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

Based on the questionnaire responses, five questions for semi-structured interviews were created. The interviews were conducted in order to elicit more details on the respondents' questionnaire responses and analyse the ways to avoid plagiarism in writing a research paper.

Data collection procedure

The questionnaire was distributed through a Google Form and took about 3 – 5 minutes to finish on average. Then, they were analysed through the data analysis software Excel. 10% of the participants were chosen randomly to participate in the interview session. With the participant's permission, the interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim for further intensive data analysis. While interviews were taped, the researchers took notes in case the recording equipment failed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire results

Figure 1. *Students' preferred online paraphrasing tools*

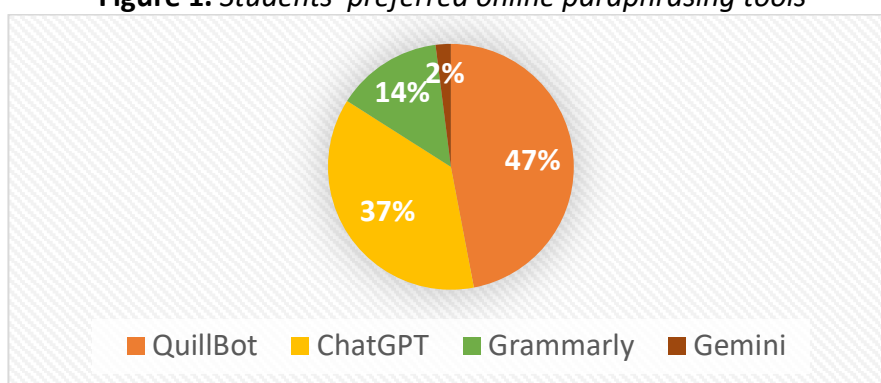


Figure 1 illustrates the students' preferred online paraphrasing tools in learning academic writing. With the question "Which online paraphrasing tool do you use the most?", QuillBot was the most favored tool among the participants as shown by the percentage in the figure (47%). ChatGPT came in second with 37 percent of the students preferring to use it when paraphrasing in writing a research paper. Grammarly seemed to be less popular than the two other tools as just 14 percent of the students chose it as the tool they used the most to help them paraphrase. Remarkably, apart from the three main online paraphrasing tools in this investigation, there were 2 out of 100 participants who both responded that their favored tool was Gemini. It was just a small percentage so the researchers would not analyzed Gemini's impacts thoroughly in the study. These results are compatible with the previous research conducted by Kurniati and Fithriani (2022) which also found that more students regularly used QuillBot than most of the other digital tools that were currently available.

Table 1. Comparison among students' perceptions of the paraphrasing strategies used by QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly

Statements	Mean		
	QuillBot	ChatGPT	Grammarly
3. It produces paraphrases by using synonyms.	4.38	4.16	3.71

4. It produces paraphrases by changing word forms.	4.04	3.95	3.64
5. It produces paraphrases by changing number and percentage.	3.28	3.30	2.36
6. It produces paraphrases by changing word order.	3.94	3.76	3.43
7. It produces paraphrases by changing active to passive or vice versa.	3.75	3.81	3.57
8. It produces paraphrases by changing positive to negative or vice versa.	2.83	3.11	3.00
9. It produces paraphrases by separating long sentences.	3.06	3.49	2.57
10. It produces paraphrases by combining short sentences.	3.62	3.84	3.00
11. It produces paraphrases by expanding phrases for clarity.	3.40	3.70	3.14
12. It produces paraphrases by condensing phrases for conciseness.	3.51	3.78	3.14
13. It produces paraphrases by reorganizing the structure/ order of the ideas inside the whole paragraph.	3.30	3.41	3.00
Weighted mean	3.56	3.66	3.14

Table 1 demonstrates the comparison among students' perceptions of the paraphrasing strategies used by the three main online paraphrasing tools in this study – QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly. Among the eleven statements in this part of the questionnaire, ChatGPT appeared to take the lead over the other two tools, as indicated by the mean scores. To be more specific, the highest mean scores of 8 out of 11 statements were from ChatGPT. There were just three statements relating to using synonyms, changing word forms, and changing word order which had the highest mean scores from QuillBot instead of ChatGPT. Accordingly, it can be implied that QuillBot uses these three paraphrasing strategies more regularly or more effectively than ChatGPT. Besides, as shown in the table, the mean scores of most of the statements from Grammarly seemed to be the lowest compared to QuillBot and ChatGPT, except for statement 8. Statement 8 about changing positive to negative was a bit different as the lowest mean score was from QuillBot (2.83). Noticeably, one thing in common among these three tools was that using synonyms was the most regularly used strategy to paraphrase. On the whole, based on the weighted mean, ChatGPT seems to use more varied paraphrasing strategies than QuillBot and Grammarly.

Table 2. Comparison among students' perceptions of the effectiveness of QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly

Statements	Mean		
	QuillBot	ChatGPT	Grammarly
14. It produces the same meaning as the source text.	3.89	3.87	3.71
15. It produces suitable expressions.	3.72	3.78	3.36
16. It produces different sentence structures from the source text.	3.79	3.92	2.93
17. It produces grammatically correct sentences.	4.32	4.24	3.86
18. It increases my understanding of the source text.	3.70	3.89	3.36
19. It expands my vocabulary used in academic writing.	4.30	4.16	3.21
20. It improves my grammar skills.	3.96	3.89	3.43
21. It helps me avoid plagiarism in academic writing.	3.75	3.54	3.14
22. It is an easily accessible tool.	4.47	4.49	4.36
23. It motivates me to write and reduces my writing anxiety.	4.02	3.70	2.86
24. It helps me reduce writing time by more than half while paraphrasing.	3.87	3.92	3.00
25. I will continue to use it in the future.	4.26	4.30	4.07

26. I find the free version good enough to help me paraphrase.	3.11	3.05	2.86
Weighted mean	3.94	3.90	3.40

Table 2 presents the comparison among students' perceptions of the effectiveness of QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly in producing paraphrases. Most students agreed that QuillBot and ChatGPT were more helpful for developing their language than Grammarly, as indicated by their mean scores (statements 18, 19, 20). Furthermore, based on available data, avoiding plagiarism in writing was one of the advantages of QuillBot and ChatGPT's paraphrasing function, with the mean scores respectively 3.75 and 3.54. Regarding tools' paraphrasing texts, all these tools were perceived positively because they maintained the source text's meaning and generated grammatically correct structures. Moreover, with easy accessibility, participants showed their willingness to continue to use these tools in the long term. In general, among these three main tools in this investigation, students perceive that QuillBot is the most effective paraphrasing tool (weighted mean = 3.94), followed by ChatGPT (3.90) and then Grammarly (3.40).

Table 3. Comparison among students' perceptions of the disadvantages of QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly

Statements	Mean		
	QuillBot	ChatGPT	Grammarly
27. I am easily distracted from my writing due to using it.	3.11	3.16	3.07
28. I become less creative and active due to overusing it.	3.64	3.65	3.29
29. I am worried that it will further intrude on my privacy.	2.85	3.05	2.36
30. I still have to double-check its suggestions because they are sometimes incompatible with the intention of the source text.	4.13	3.89	3.79
Weighted mean	3.43	3.44	3.13

Table 3 illustrates the comparison among students' perceptions of the downsides of QuillBot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly in paraphrasing. As shown in the table, students showed their perceptions of the three tools' disadvantages in the same way. They all evaluated that losing distractions and being intruded upon privacy were not remarkable drawbacks of these tools. Moreover, students agreed that they tended to rely too much on digital tools instead of developing their writing, giving rise to a decrease in creativity and activity. Another similarity was that these tools sometimes suggested some recommendations that were incompatible with the intention of the author. Based on these findings, it is crucial to raise students' awareness about the potential drawbacks of overdependence on these tools so that they can use the tools suitably and effectively.

Interview results

Figure 2 reveals the first question's answers from 10 students randomly chosen for the interview session. When the students were asked again about their preferred online paraphrasing tools, half of them said that they used ChatGPT and the other half said that they used QuillBot. There were just these two tools mentioned in their answers, which once again emphasized the popularity of ChatGPT and QuillBot among the students to help them paraphrase in academic writing.

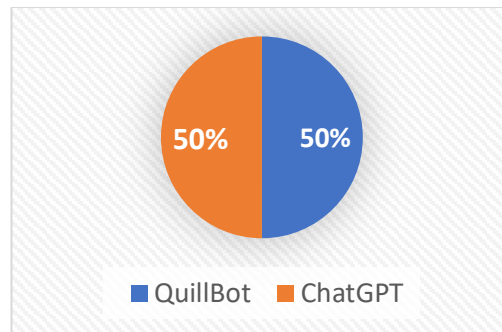


Figure 2. Students' responses to question 1

Table 4. Transcription of students' responses to question 2

No.	Theme categories	Transcription of students' answers	
		QuillBot	ChatGPT
1.	Suitable and effective paraphrases	(1) In my experience, QuillBot suggests more effective ways to paraphrase my sentences such as using academic words and sentence structures but still maintaining their original meanings.	(5) I think ChatGPT gives the most cohesive and coherent texts when it comes to paraphrasing.
2.	Accessibility	(4) The most noticeable advantage of QuillBot is its accessibility. All I need is the Internet to get free access to the tool.	(2) I think the most outstanding advantage of ChatGPT is its convenience, you can use it whenever you want as it needs a smartphone with a 4G connection or Wi-Fi.
3.	Reliability	(7) QuillBot can paraphrase immediately and provide other options, but the most noticeable I think it is the most legit paraphrasing tool that I might find on google.	(10) ChatGPT's information is reliable, and I can adjust any words or phrases or sentences in the paragraph easily.
4.	Multiple paraphrasing options	(8) I think it is the ability to provide multiple paraphrased options for a given sentence or paragraph. Moreover, QuillBot also helps me to ensure that the paraphrased text is grammatically correct. (9) The benefit I love most is that in addition to the paraphrasing function, which provides results quickly with a wide range of paraphrases (standard, fluency, natural, formal, academic, etc.), QuillBot also has different supporting functions such as summarize, translate, citation generate, plagiarism checker, etc.	(3) In my opinion, the most prominent benefit of ChatGPT is that both the free and premium versions can efficiently paraphrase with a wide range of vocabulary.
5.	Special supporting function		(6) In my opinion, ChatGPT is a new tool designed in 2022, so it is equipped with more improvements compared to older tools. Moreover, I can send a picture of the paragraph in English and get ChatGPT to paraphrase without copying and pasting like others.

All the students' answers to question 2 *"Which is the most noticeable advantage of this tool in your opinion?"* in the interview are presented in Table 4, accompanied by the theme categories classified according to their answers. As shown in the table, there were four advantages that the students preferring QuillBot and ChatGPT all mentioned, which were about suitable and effective paraphrases, accessibility, reliability, and multiple paraphrasing options. Firstly, there were two students saying that the tools could produce suitable and effective paraphrases, even though their chosen tools were not the same. To be more specific, one student using QuillBot claimed that it suggested *"more effective ways to paraphrase"* by *"using academic words and sentence structures"*. Meanwhile, another student using ChatGPT said that it was useful in paraphrasing thanks to the production of *"cohesive and coherent texts"*. Secondly, two out of ten students reported that both QuillBot and ChatGPT were easy to use, which meant the students just needed a smartphone and Internet connection to get access to these online paraphrasing tools. This advantage is supposed to be one of the most noticeable ones of the tools investigated in this study, as also indicated by the collected data from the questionnaire above. Thirdly, QuillBot and ChatGPT were reliable tools as reported by two students. Furthermore, apart from the reliability, these two students also mentioned other advantages of the tools. The student choosing QuillBot noted that *"QuillBot can paraphrase immediately and provide other options"* whereas another one choosing ChatGPT said that she *"can adjust any words or phrases or sentences in the paragraph easily"*. They were about the ease of use of the tools and the various options of QuillBot. Providing multiple paraphrasing options was also mentioned by two more students using QuillBot and one student using ChatGPT as the most remarkable advantage of the tools in their opinions. The students claimed that the tools could provide a wide range of options relating to different paraphrasing styles and extensive vocabulary. Based on the students' answers in this theme category, QuillBot seemed to be more noticeable than ChatGPT concerning producing multiple paraphrasing options for users. In addition to those four advantages, it was noted that ChatGPT had one special supporting function that QuillBot did not. One student using ChatGPT said that she could *"send a picture of the paragraph in English and get ChatGPT to paraphrase without copying and pasting like others"*. This function appears to be useful to some extent as it can help to save users' time.

Table 5. Transcription of students' responses to question 3

No.	Theme categories	Transcription of students' answers	
		QuillBot	ChatGPT
1.	Mechanical and unsuitable paraphrases	(1) Sometimes QuillBot suggests to me some unnatural paraphrased sentences that make my essays more difficult to understand because the words it suggests may be unsuitable for the context of my essays.	(2) The drawback of ChatGPT is about the way this tool works. Sometimes when I ask them for a paraphrase, this tool gives me the answer that is not related to my question. It does not only affect my learning process but also stops me from developing my English ability.
		(4) Sometimes without the clear context provided, QuillBot cannot precisely generate a paraphrased version. It is about the problem of word choice when I paraphrase technical terms.	(5) For me, ChatGPT does not always give me the best answers. Sometimes I have to double-check the paraphrased text given by ChatGPT because I see some unreasonable words and they're not suitable for my academic work.

		(8) The disadvantage of QuillBot is that you need to carefully review the paraphrased paragraph before using it in your own work, as it can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.	(6) To me, ChatGPT is AI, so it just gives general and mechanical sentences or paraphrases. In addition, if your requests are not clear, ChatGPT does not understand and cannot work as your expectations.
2.	AI cheating accusation	(7) QuillBot's output cannot always pass the AI detection tool, I guess. Once, I used QuillBot to paraphrase a passage and then I used a website called AI Text Classifier to check plagiarism. Turns out, there is no plagiarism but found to be AI writing.	
3.	Incoherent paragraphs	(9) I think the most obvious drawback of QuillBot is to paraphrase each sentence in a paragraph, respectively, without the whole one.	
4.	Tedious paraphrasing process		(3) The most apparent drawback of this tool is that the paraphrasing process with ChatGPT can be somewhat tedious and may not produce the desired result in the first iteration.
5.	Time limit		(10) ChatGPT limits the times I use it, if it gets limited, I need to use another tool.

Table 5 shows all the students' answers to question 3 *"Which is the most obvious disadvantage of this tool in your opinion?"* along with the theme categories based on those answers in the interview session. Although producing suitable and effective paraphrases was mentioned as the most noticeable advantage of QuillBot and ChatGPT by two students in the first question above, there were even over half of the students participating in the interview (60%) reported that these two online tools sometimes generated mechanical and unsuitable paraphrases for their writing. To be more specific, the students using QuillBot said that the tool's output might be *"difficult to understand"* and occasionally led to *"misunderstandings"* as a result of *"the problem of word choice"* and *"unnatural paraphrased sentences"*. Similarly, three out of five students using ChatGPT were concerned about *"the way this tool works"*. One student emphasized that *"sometimes when I ask them for a paraphrase, this tool gives me the answer that is not related to my question"*, and another one reported in the same way *"Sometimes I have to double-check the paraphrased text given by ChatGPT because I see some unreasonable words and they're not suitable for my academic work"*. In addition, as ChatGPT is not a tool specifically designed to help with paraphrasing, users need to enter a prompt to ask it to paraphrase a sentence or a paragraph. In consequence, one student noted that *"if your requests are not clear, ChatGPT does not understand and cannot work as your expectations"*. AI cheating accusation was the next disadvantage of online paraphrasing tool mentioned by one student using QuillBot. It might be one of the results of unnatural and mechanical sentences produced by that tool. In addition, QuillBot was also reported to generate incoherent paraphrased paragraphs by one student. She explained that QuillBot *"paraphrase each sentence in a paragraph, respectively, without the whole one"*. On the other hand, although ChatGPT was not concerned with those two drawbacks according to the students' answers in the interview, it was reported to have a tedious paraphrasing process and time limit, which were the most obvious problems according to two out of five students

choosing ChatGPT. In particular, one student said that ChatGPT “*may not produce the desired result in the first iteration*”. This problem is supposed to take more time of the users in their writing process. Besides, there was just one student saying that “*ChatGPT limits the times*” she used it, so she needed another tool when it got limited. In conclusion, according to 10 answers to question 3 in the interview session, producing mechanical and unsuitable paraphrases seems to be the most obvious disadvantage of online paraphrasing tools (QuillBot and ChatGPT) among the students.

Table 6. Transcription of students’ responses to question 4

Tools	Transcription of students’ answers
QuillBot	<p>(1) Yes, definitely.</p> <p>(4) Yes, I think so.</p> <p>(7) Absolutely yes, but as I mentioned before, it might be found out whether AI writes or not.</p> <p>(8) Yes, I think avoiding plagiarism is one of the most significant advantages of using QuillBot. I mean that the tool helps me to paraphrase and express the same meanings in my own words.</p> <p>(9) Yes, I suppose that this tool is helpful to prevent plagiarism as much as possible.</p>
ChatGPT	<p>(2) I don’t think so, because it is too hard for us to avoid plagiarism when we write. This paraphrasing tool only focuses on how to write a sentence in different ways, it can reduce the ability of plagiarism, but it can’t completely avoid this problem.</p> <p>(3) In my view, preventing plagiarism is not a significant benefit of the tool as it just could reduce plagiarism by rephrasing sentences using different words while maintaining their original meaning.</p> <p>(5) Yes. For me, after I have read a source, I can input the original text into ChatGPT and ask for a paraphrase to avoid plagiarism.</p> <p>(6) Yes, I do. In my research process, I have read much previous research and acquired outstanding results, I really want to write paragraphs like this in my thesis but because of avoiding plagiarism, I copied the paragraphs that I like and have ChatGPT paraphrase them.</p> <p>(10) Definitely yes. However, if everyone does the same paraphrase with the same passage, I suppose that the outcome still looks the same.</p>

Table 6 presents the transcription of the interviewees’ answers to the fourth question “*Do you think avoiding plagiarism is also an important advantage of this tool?*”. Based on available interview data regarding QuillBot, five students indicated that avoiding plagiarism is another considerable benefit of this tool. This result is consistent with a previous study conducted by Asmara and Kastuhandani (2024), which identified that QuillBot was considered an effective tool for preventing plagiarism by supporting students to paraphrase in their writing. On the other hand, ChatGPT was not completely recognized as an effective paraphrasing tool that can help students avoid plagiarism. Two of them believed that ChatGPT could “*reduce the ability of plagiarism*” but not entirely avoid it. Moreover, the tenth student also stated that “*if everyone does the same paraphrase with the same passage, I suppose that the outcome still looks the same*”, which means if many researchers copy the same passage from the source text, paste it on ChatGPT and take ChatGPT’s paraphrases as their own writing without afterward editing or checking, their writing would be detected as being written by AI, in line with the seventh student’s answer, which was “*it might be found out whether AI writes or not*”, when she talked about QuillBot’s suggestions. These cases can be examined as plagiarism if students do not provide proper attribution or reflect their own insights and understanding after paraphrasing others’ ideas in their works. Overall, avoiding plagiarism is perceived as a vital advantage of paraphrasing tools.

Table 7. Transcription of students' responses to question 5

Tools	Transcription of students' answers
QuillBot	<p>(1) I usually ask QuillBot to give me a paraphrased version of an original text from the literature. Next, I review them to make sure that they can match the context of my paper and then integrate my understanding into the sentences. I also cite the original author to avoid plagiarism.</p> <p>(4) I copy a sentence and paste it into the app. Then I press the button to paraphrase. If I want to keep a word unchanged, I will freeze it. After that, I will self-check to make any changes if necessary.</p> <p>(7) Instead of using synonyms, I'd prefer QuillBot to change my sentences or passages into passive voice or word formation. In addition, usually, I will use another website to change the output so that AI detection tools cannot detect that I used QuillBot.</p> <p>(8) I remember that QuillBot has a plagiarism checker which helps to identify problems related to plagiarism. Moreover, I use the Paraphrase function to generate other versions of the text.</p> <p>(9) I summarize the research paper in my own words before paraphrasing.</p>
ChatGPT	<p>(2) I think the way that people write in a research paper is different due to their mindset. That's why I can use ChatGPT by searching the keywords and topics related to them. After watching the reference, I will write this research in my mind. Of course, after I've searched the sentence, I will choose the idea and context which is appropriate to my current research topic. Then I will write it in order.</p> <p>(3) I don't know how to use it to avoid plagiarism, I just consider ChatGPT as a helpful writing aid that assists in critical thinking and creativity. When in doubt about the originality or appropriateness of my work, I sometimes seek feedback from peers, instructors, or professionals... They can offer helpful feedback, spot potential concerns, and help me uphold integrity in my writing.</p> <p>(5) For me, after I have read a source, I can input the original text into ChatGPT and ask for a paraphrase. I usually change words given by ChatGPT into some of their synonyms or change the structure of sentences, check spelling again and check text again whether it is coherent and cohesive.</p> <p>(6) I use ChatGPT as a paraphrasing tool, in my research process, I have read much previous research and acquired outstanding results, I really want to write paragraphs like this but to avoid plagiarism, I copied the paragraphs that I like and have ChatGPT paraphrased them. However, because ChatGPT is AI, it sometimes gives me mechanical sentences and I need to add more steps such as checking AI-generated sentences again and replacing some words if necessary to make my paragraphs better.</p> <p>(10) Most of the time I try to paraphrase all the passage then I will pick out some words in the passage and change them one more time to avoid plagiarism. Then, I did change a bit of some sentences or words that I think it was not really suit my need, in addition, I also wanted it to sound natural, so I decided to modify it after paraphrasing.</p>

Table 7 shows the answers to the fifth interview question “How can you utilize this tool to avoid plagiarism in your research paper?”. Since acknowledging the severity of plagiarism, most students suggested many additional steps instead of applying tools' recommendations directly in their writing. No matter what tools the students used, they applied some of the same techniques. Firstly, students (2) and (9) recommended that they summarized and rephrased the source text themselves before asking the tools to paraphrase. Secondly, other students reported that after copying the source text and having the tools paraphrase, they modified the words, sentences, structures, spelling and added their insights to ensure that it suited their needs and sounded natural. Thirdly, one out of ten said that she would ask tools' plagiarism checker function “to identify problems related to plagiarism”. Furthermore, student (3) also sought “feedback from peers, instructors, or professionals” to “uphold integrity” in her writing. Finally, students also cited “the original author”, which is the most essential step “to avoid plagiarism”. Generally, it is indispensable for students to

understand the value of originality in a research paper and show their respect for the previous authors by providing proper attribution.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into the use of online paraphrasing tools among English-majored students at Sai Gon University. Our findings reveal that QuillBot is the most popular and effective tool for paraphrasing, even though ChatGPT offers a wider variety of strategies. A key advantage of both tools, as perceived by students, is their ability to help avoid plagiarism. However, students were keenly aware of the significant drawbacks, including a decrease in their own creativity and the production of mechanical, unnatural-sounding paraphrases.

Ultimately, the research underscores a critical balance. While these tools can be powerful aids, overreliance on them is detrimental to genuine skill development. Therefore, we recommend a strategic, multi-step approach for students: understand the source text, attempt to paraphrase independently first, and then use the tool's output as a draft to be carefully checked and revised. Proper citation remains a non-negotiable step.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this study suggests that educators should not simply ban these tools but rather integrate them responsibly into the curriculum. Teachers can guide students on effective paraphrasing strategies and the ethical use of AI. By raising awareness of plagiarism risks and encouraging students to treat these tools as learning aids rather than complete solutions, teachers can help students develop both their writing skills and their academic integrity. Future research with a larger sample size and experimental design could provide a deeper understanding of the long-term impacts of these tools.

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