

Students' Perception on the Use of AI Paraphrasing Tools in Writing Research Proposal

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Abstract

The use of AI Paraphrasing Tools in education creates a conflict. These tools offer potential benefits for student writing, but their improper use raises serious concerns about plagiarism. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of AI paraphrasing tools in research proposal writing. The scope of this research includes the advantages and disadvantages of AI paraphrasing tools. The participants of this study were 23 students from the English Language Education Program at the State Islamic Institute of Manado for the 2020/2021 academic year. This study employed a qualitative research method, and the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the students as an instrument. The questionnaire included 15 open-ended questions on Google Forms. The findings indicate that many students recognize the efficiency and convenience provided by these tools. They highlighted how AI paraphrasing tools can save time, improve content clarity, and assist in avoiding plagiarism. However, this study also revealed some drawbacks associated with the use of AI paraphrasing tools. The primary concern expressed by students was the potential of these tools to misinterpret the original meaning, resulting in inaccuracies and loss of context. Additionally, students noted that excessive reliance on these tools might diminish their critical thinking and creativity, ultimately hindering the development of their writing skills.

Keywords: Writing, Research Proposal, AI Paraphrasing Tools

Introduction

In the contemporary digital age, technology pervades every facet of human life, including education. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered paraphrasing tools has significantly impacted academic discourse. Students, actively engaged in various writing tasks, consistently face the challenge of presenting information in an original and plagiarism-free manner. Academic writing demands a

rigorous approach, requiring students to generate novel ideas, substantiate their work with evidence from credible research, and adhere to strict grammatical and linguistic standards.

Previous research has underscored the inherent complexities of paraphrasing, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Compared to native speakers, EFL students often encounter more significant difficulties in paraphrasing, especially those with limited academic background. For Indonesian EFL students, these challenges manifest across various cognitive domains, including linguistic, psychological, and cognitive aspects. Studies have revealed that a substantial portion of Indonesian EFL students struggle with specific aspects of paraphrasing, such as word formatting, grammatical structures, article usage, word class selection, and accurate word choice, as Rahmatunisa (2014) found that the majority of students encountered issues with word formatting (30.2%), grammatical structures (23.2%), articles (21%), word classes (16.3%), and word usage errors (9.3%)

Paraphrasing is a fundamental skill in academic writing, enabling students to accurately represent others' ideas without plagiarizing. It involves the skillful rewriting, restating, rewording, and rephrasing of sentences while maintaining the original meaning (Inayah & Sulistyningrum, 2021; Rahmayani, 2018). To assist students in mastering this crucial skill, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) has integrated advanced paraphrasing tools. While existing research has extensively investigated student challenges and strategies in paraphrasing, a significant gap remains in understanding their perceptions and experiences with these AI-powered tools.

Paraphrasing can be difficult for language learners to master (Khristawan & Widiati, 2013). Automated paraphrasing tools (APTs) offer a range of strategies to help improve writing quality, including using synonyms, changing word forms, switching between active and passive voice, and rearranging sentence structures (Fitria, 2021; Inayah & Sulistyningrum, 2021). Several studies have examined the strategies and effectiveness of these tools. For example, Chen et al. (2015) found that APTs significantly enhanced the writing abilities of EFL learners struggling to meet writing requirements. Similarly, Yan (2023) highlighted that APTs helped students better organize their writing, simplify complex ideas, and deepen their understanding of concepts. Roe & Perkins (2022) and Prentice & Kinden (2019) pointed out that APTs could rephrase text by altering syntax while maintaining the

original meaning. Tran & Nguyen (2022) also observed that APTs contributed to notable improvements in academic writing skills, including task performance, proper citation, sentence structure, spelling, and vocabulary. Given these benefits, APTs have gained popularity among students as a valuable tool for enhancing writing skills.

Although APTs offer notable advantages in enhancing writing skills and supporting EFL students, they have limitations. Bailey & Withers (2018) and Prentice & Kinden (2018) pointed out that students often rely excessively on these tools, leading to repetitive content and awkward phrasing. Rogerson & McCarthy (2017) underscored the necessity of crediting original authors and warned about the risks of using APTs improperly without proper citation. Ansorge et al. (2021) also noted that texts generated by APTs often lack linguistic accuracy and include incorrect terminology. Furthermore, APTs can pose a threat to academic integrity when students misuse them to paraphrase. As a new technology, APTs have drawn attention from researchers seeking to understand students' experiences with them. Rahmayani (2018) and Inayah & Sulistyningrum (2021) highlighted the value of APTs in helping students produce more organized and coherent writing. Similarly, Miranda (2021) found that students appreciated how APTs introduced new vocabulary and enhanced their writing abilities. Study by Syahnaz & Fithriani (2023) revealed that students had a positive experience using QuillBot, noting its ability to improve both their writing quality and their understanding of the content. In addition, Nurmayanti & Suryadi (2023) discovered that QuillBot supported students in learning English while boosting their engagement in writing. Its corrective feedback feature not only saved time and effort but also helped increase students' confidence by improving their writing outcomes.

To summarize, APTs are effective tools for helping students address challenges in paraphrasing. Research indicates that EFL students generally view APTs as beneficial for academic writing. These tools mimic human paraphrasing strategies, such as replacing words with synonyms and reorganizing sentence structures. However, while APTs can solve certain language-related issues, students should use them in moderation. By integrating APTs into their learning process without becoming overly dependent on them, students can take advantage of the technology's benefits while developing their own writing skills. others' work and claim it as their own (Roe & Perkins, 2022).

Based on previous research, the dominant focus on the use of using AI Paraphrasing is in writing essays or paragraphs. Meanwhile, this research is focused on the use of APTs in writing research proposals. Therefore, the results of this research portrayed the EFL students' experience and perception of the use of APTs in helping them compose their research proposal.

Methodology

The research used a qualitative descriptive methodology that analyzed the questionnaire for its data collection technique. The researcher analyzed the questionnaire, and those questions used to find out former knowledge on how Students Perceptions of the use of AI Paraphrasing Tools in Writing Research Proposals.

The study involved 23 students from the 2020 batch, currently in their ninth semester of the English Education Study Program under the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training at IAIN Manado. These students were working on their research proposals, a requirement for obtaining a bachelor's degree in English Education. Their objective was to produce well-structured and plagiarism-free research in English. Having completed two writing courses and a course on ELT research, the participants were accustomed to using APTs as tools to assist in writing their research proposals. A Google Form containing 15 open-ended questions was utilized to assess students' perceptions of using APTs to enhance their research proposal writing. The questionnaire focused on three aspects: the reasons for using APTs, the benefits of APTs, and the challenges associated with using APTs for paraphrasing.

Findings

Reasons for Using AI Paraphrasing Tools

Twenty-three students responded to the open-ended questions. In response to the first question, "Have you ever used a paraphrasing tool?" all the students said yes. The second question asked them about the tools they use. The finding showed that is 50% of students (11 students) used ChatGPT paraphrasing tools, 40.91% students (9 students) used Quillbot.com paraphrasing tools, and 9.09% (3 students) used other paraphrasing tools, such as DeepL and Perplexity.

The third question asked about their reasons for using APTs. Most participants perceived APTs as a valuable tool with numerous benefits and were willing to work with it, primarily in avoiding plagiarism, providing easiness, and helping to create new sentences for their proposals. The participants' responses can be seen in table 1, table 2, and table 3.

Table 1. Students' Reasons of using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Avoiding Plagiarism

No	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 1	To perfect the sentence and avoid plagiarism
2	Respondent 7	To avoid plagiarism
3	Respondent 10	In order to avoid plagiarism
4	Respondent 16	<i>AI Paraphrasing Tools can help ensure our writing is plagiarism-free.</i>
5	Respondent 18	<i>"Because it makes easier to paraphrase sentences and avoid plagiarism."</i>

Based on all the statements given by the students regarding the use of AI Paraphrasing Tools is that most students use this tool to ensure their writing is free from plagiarism. They found AI Paraphrasing Tools to be an effective tool in helping them rephrase sentences with the aim of avoiding plagiarism detection.

Table 2. Students' Reasons of using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Providing Easiness

No	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 4	To help me paraphrase more easily
2	Respondent 5	<i>When I use chatgpt, I think it can help and is easier than other AI paraphrasing tools.</i>
3	Respondent 6	<i>Because it makes it easier for me when I want to paraphrase a sentence or paragraph.</i>
4	Respondent 9	Because it's easier to use
5	Respondent 11	Make it easier
7	Respondent 13	Because it's easier and more practical

Based on all the statements given by the students is that most students use this tool because of the ease and practicality it offers. The tool is considered helpful in the paraphrasing process, especially when facing difficulties in reordering sentences or paragraphs.

Table 3. Students' Reasons of using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Creating New Sentences

No	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 2	<i>For grammatically purposes, to makethe sentences more formal in writing</i>
2	Respondent 8	To re- express information read or heard in a different form
3	Respondent 15	<i>Can change sentences or paragraphs into different forms without changing their meaning, so that you can focus on the more important details of the sentence.</i>

Based on all statements given by the students, they used it to improve the quality of their writing by focusing on grammatical aspects and rephrasing information without changing the original meaning.

Students' Perception on the Advantages of using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Writing Research Proposal

All participants had an opinion about the tools they used, and as a result, the researchers discovered a wide range of perceptions about the tools they used to assist them in Writing Research Proposal. Participants described their experiences using paraphrasing tools to help them in writing research proposal. They revealed that the paraphrasing tools they used were very useful in helping them rephrase sentences to make clearer, more effective, save time and also remove plagiarism.

Removing Plagiarism

Paraphrasing tools can determine whether or not the content students have contained plagiarism or has been influenced by previously published material. An easy-to-use paraphrasing tool will spin content and generate unique new content from it.

Table 4. Using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Removing Plagiarism

	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 2	<i>AI Paraphrasing Tools avoiding plagiarism because research method that I used mostly same with other researchers so it can avoid plagiarism</i>
4	Respondent 16	<i>AI Paraphrasing Tools are very helpful in avoiding plagiarism when paraphrasing a literature review.</i>
5	Respondent 19	<i>“In my opinion, AI paraphrasing is actually not needed in the research methods section.”</i>
6	Respondent 21	Using AI in the introduction can reduce the rate of plagiarism and that is very beneficial.

Table 4 revealed that one of the main benefits perceived by students in using the AI paraphrasing tool is its ability to help reduce the risk of plagiarism. The tool was very effective in making their writing free from copyright infringement or plagiarism, both in the introduction, literature review, and research methods sections. However, Respondent 19 expressed a different view, stating that paraphrase AI is not really necessary in the research methods section, suggesting that the perception of the usefulness of this tool may vary depending on the section of the paper at hand.

Demonstrating Writing Style

With the help of paraphrasing tools, writing long sentences becomes more manageable. Using a paraphrasing tool, students can quickly transform long passages of writing into shorter, more meaningful phrases.

Table 5. Using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Demonstrating Writing Style

No	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 1	In addition to clarifying the purpose and objective of a research proposal, AI Paraphrasing Tools also help in refining the rules of good and correct writing
3	Respondent 5	<i>AI Paraphrasing Tools can quickly give ideas in arranging words.</i>

Based on the statements of the respondents in table 5, it can be concluded that the AI paraphrasing tool is very helpful for students in perfecting their academic writing style. The tool not only helped in crafting clearer and more precise sentences, but also improved the rules of good and correct writing, making it easier to write introductions and research proposals. Respondents emphasized that the AI paraphrasing tool simplifies the process of word and sentence construction, and speeds up paraphrasing with easier-to-understand language.

Time-Saving

When using paraphrasing tools, it is possible to paraphrase an article in short-time. A paraphrasing tool can generate content in seconds, allowing the author to infuse his or her personality into the material during the creation process. It will save students time while also increasing the rate of productivity in Writing research proposal.

Table 6. Using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Time Saving

No	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 2	<i>The advatages is efficient because it can save a lot of time.</i>
2	Respondent 5	<i>I haven't found any disadvantages because every time I use ChatGPT it makes things easier and save time.</i>
3	Respondent 13	<i>AI Paraphrasing Tools helps her to paraphrase the literature review so that it is faster to finish it</i>

From table 6 above we got information that one of the main advantages of using AI Paraphrasing Tools is the significant time savings in academic writing, particularly in research proposal writing. Respondents highlighted the efficiency of the tool, which allowed them to complete tasks faster and with more ease. Respondents also emphasized that the AI paraphrasing tool was helpful in speeding up the literature review writing process.

Creating a New Sentence Structure

When writing effectively, it is critical to maintain sentence structure. A link between the previous and following sentences in the content is ideal, but this is not always possible in practice. By generating new sentence structures, the paraphrasing tool will help students improve their writing skills.

Table 7. Using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Creating a new sentence structure

No	Number of Respondent	Data Statements
1	Respondent 15	<i>AI Paraphrasing Tools can help develop and enrich my own ideas."</i>
2	Respondent 18	<i>Increases clarity and conciseness [...] improve sentence structure and aids in revision</i>

Table 7 presented that AI paraphrasing tool contributes to improving and developing sentence structure, which in turn helps to improve students' writing skills. Respondents emphasized that the tool allows them to consider different ways to express ideas, thus developing and enriching their own ideas. They added that the AI paraphrasing tool improves sentence clarity and accuracy, and helps improve sentence structure, which is also useful in the revision process.

Students' Perception about Disadvantages of using AI Paraphrasing Tools in Writing Research Proposal

This section discussed about the Students' Perception about disadvantages of AI Paraphrasing Tools in Writing Research Proposal. While paraphrasing tools may seem beneficial to students, especially native English speakers, they have drawbacks and are inaccurate, and should not be allowed to be used as such. Native English speakers, these tools are flawed and inaccurate, and should not be used as a substitute for learning to paraphrase on their own to be effective.

Misinterpretation and Inaccuracy

AI Paraphrasing can sometimes lead to a misinterpretation of the original text, as the nuances and specific meanings of the original content may be inaccurate or misleading in the paraphrasing process.

Table 8. Misinterpretation and Inaccuracy

No	Number of Respondent	Statements
1	Respondent 2	<i>In research method I have encountered a disadvantages like the lack of clarity of the method, the AI sometimes in not understanding the context of the text I send</i>
2	Respondent 6	<i>There risk of losing the original meaning, inaccurate context, reducing the quality of the language and the possibility of plagiarism detected</i>

3	Respondent 23	Disadvantages of using AI Paraphrasing Tools for “Literature Reviews” include the possibility of missing important details from the original sources, decreased accuracy of information, and the risk of not properly reflecting the context of relevant research
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Based on the respondents' statements in table 8, it can be concluded that one of the main disadvantages of using AI Paraphrasing Tools is the risk of misunderstanding the original text. Respondents revealed that these tools can lead to loss of original meaning, context inaccuracies, degradation of language quality, and potential plagiarism detection. Moreover, in literature review, the tool can lead to loss of important details from the original source, degrade the accuracy of the information, and not reflect the context of the research well. Working on research method, the respondents faced issues such as lack of clarity as the AI tool sometimes does not understand the context of the given text.

Triggering Laziness

Increasing reliance on AI to paraphrase can lead to human laziness. As AI systems take over more responsibilities, individuals may become less interested in developing their skills and knowledge, and overly dependent on AI. This dependency can reduce the ability to think critically in paraphrasing, as people may prefer AI solutions without questioning their validity or seeking other alternatives.

Table 9. Triggering Laziness

No	Number of Respondent	Data Statements
1	Respondent 8	One of the biggest disadvantages of using AI Paraphrasing Tools is that it makes you completely dependent on other people's content. you have no ideas or thoughts of your own. this hinders the development of your knowledge and academic writing skills
2	Respondent 13	Make me lazy to think and paraphrase manually so I don't understand how to paraphrase by myself without the help of AI
3	Respondent 15	<i>Relying too much on technology, thus underutilizing someone own ability in writing and critical thinking</i>

The overuse of AI Paraphrasing Tools can encourage laziness and reduce critical thinking and independent writing skills. In table 9, respondents agreed that

the tool makes him lazy to think and paraphrase manually, hindering his understanding of how paraphrasing is done without the help of AI. In addition, it is true that reliance on this tool can make one overly dependent on others' content, hindering the development of personal ideas and knowledge as well as academic writing skills. They emphasized that over-reliance on technology can lead to underutilization of one's ability to write and think critically.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate EFL students' perceptions of using APTs for writing research proposals and to identify the benefits and drawbacks of these tools. To address the research question, their perceptions were examined through three dimensions of the questionnaire: reasons for using APTs in paraphrasing, the advantages of APTs, and the disadvantages of paraphrasing tools. The questionnaire responses offered an in-depth understanding of how EFL students view the use of APTs in developing their research proposals.

The findings provide answers to the question and analyze how often students used different APTs. ChatGPT and Quillbot emerged as the most popular choice among students, followed by DeepL and Perplexity. This preference may stem from the tools' accuracy and their wide range of phrasing options, including "standard, fluency, formal, simple, creative, expand, and shorter." These results are consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Fitria (2021); Nurmayanti & Suryadi (2023); Syahnaz & Fithriani (2023)), which also found QuillBot to be a favored tool in writing classes and particularly helpful for writing in a foreign language. It is essential to note, however, that these conclusions are based on the surveyed group and may not represent the general population.

Students expressed that APTs enhanced their writing quality. One student remarked, "I use ChatGPT to perfect the sentence and avoid plagiarism," while another shared, "I use Quillbot for grammatically purposes, to make the sentences more formal in writing." These views align with findings from earlier studies, which also concluded that APTs contribute to improved writing performance (e.g., Inayah & Sulistyaningrum (2021); Nurmayanti & Suryadi (2023)).

The findings section highlights students' perceptions of the benefits of using paraphrasing tools. The primary advantage identified is how APTs aid in avoiding plagiarism during the paraphrasing process. Students reported that these tools help ensure their work remains plagiarism-free, with one student noting, "AI

Paraphrasing Tools can help ensure our writing is plagiarism-free." Additionally, students appreciated how APTs simplify the research-writing process. For example, one student shared, "It makes it easier for me when I want to paraphrase a sentence or paragraph." Another added, "APTs can change sentences or paragraphs into different forms without altering their meaning, allowing you to focus on more important details." The use of APTs to address challenges with grammar and vocabulary has also been corroborated by previous studies (e.g., Miranda (2021); Inayah & Sulistyaningrum (2021).

Not only does it help create new sentence structures and speed up the writing process, the paraphrasing tool can also improve students' vocabulary, avoid plagiarism and make sentences clearer and more effective while maintaining the original meaning of the content. Inayah & Sulistyaningrum (2021) in her research mentioned that using online paraphrasing tools can assist students in overcoming writing issues in terms of content, structure, language use, and paraphrasing approach. Students also think that paraphrasing tools can be used as learning aids to improve their skills of paraphrasing. This is related with the theory from Rogerson & McCarthy (2017) that the use of the paraphrasing tool may interfere with their ability to improve their paraphrasing skills.

According to the results of the questionnaire, students were aware that using AI Paraphrasing Tools on a regular basis could have disadvantages on the students. Based on the respondents' statements, the main drawback of AI Paraphrasing Tools is the potential for over-reliance, which can reduce critical thinking and writing skills. These tools make users lazy to paraphrase manually and rely too much on automated results. Furthermore, the quality of the paraphrases produced is not always precise, often still requiring manual checking and editing, especially in understanding the context and nuances of the language, this relates to previous research from Prentice & Kinden (2018) which reached a similar conclusion, observing that APTs lacked accuracy when paraphrasing medical texts. This aligns with the findings of Ansorge et al. (2021), who noted that texts paraphrased by APTs often exhibit inaccurate terminology.

Some respondents also stated that "it makes you completely dependent on other people's content. You have no ideas or thoughts of your own". Another student said "Relying too much on technology, thus underutilizing someone own ability in writing and critical thinking. Depending heavily on these tools may hinder students' ability to become self-sufficient, ultimately limiting continuous

improvement in their writing skills. Consequently, it is crucial to train students, especially EFL learners, in effective paraphrasing strategies and to raise awareness of the potential drawbacks of overdependence on such tools. This conclusion is supported by the findings of Rogerson & McCarthy (2017) and Rahmayani (2018).

Conclusion

In this research, students' perceptions towards the use of AI paraphrasing tools in research proposal writing showed a mixture of advantages, disadvantages, and challenges. On the advantages side, many students recognized the efficiency and convenience provided by these tools. They highlighted how AI paraphrasing tools can save time, improve content clarity, and help avoid plagiarism. However, the research also revealed some disadvantages associated with using AI paraphrasing tools. The main concern expressed by students was the potential for these tools to generate content that could misinterpret the original meaning, resulting in inaccuracies and loss of context. Furthermore, students expressed that over-reliance on these tools could reduce their critical thinking ability and creativity, ultimately hindering the development of their own writing skills.

This research also provides implications of the AI use in educational field. For the lecturers, it is advisable to provide more intensive assistance on how to use AI Paraphrasing Tools wisely. Students need to be equipped with an understanding of when and how this tool should be used, as well as the risks of dependency that may arise. This way, students can utilize technology without compromising the development of their writing skills. In addition, the findings of this research reveal that students rely heavily on the use of AI Paraphrasing Tools in writing research proposal. This can have an impact on students' confidence and their ability to paraphrase. Therefore, it is essential for lectures to stress the importance of learning paraphrasing techniques independently while also utilizing these tools. Moreover, students need to be aware of the distinction between using APTs for practice and misusing them to plagiarize.

Lastly, future researcher who are interested in similar topics, they can investigate the use of AI Paraphrasing Tools for other types of academic research or investigate how to overcome the challenges of using APTs, and the ethical usage of APTs in writing. Further research could assess the effectiveness of APTs to determine their usefulness for learners across various contexts. Moreover, studies

might compare the results of APTs with human paraphrasing to evaluate their accuracy and reliability.

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