

The use of Quillbot in Teaching and Learning English Writing Skills for Non-English Major Students in the General English 3 Course at Hoa Lu University

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Abstract: *This study examines the impact of Quillbot, an AI-powered tool, on improving writing skills for non-English major students in the General English 3 course at Hoa Lu University. The study discusses the importance of AI in education and relevant policies from Vietnam's Ministry of Education. Practical tips for maximizing Quillbot's features are provided.*

Keywords: *Quillbot, AI-powered tools, writing skills, non-English major students, General English 3, Hoa Lu University.*

1. Introduction

English proficiency is essential for Vietnamese students as the country integrates into the global economy. Recognizing this, the Ministry of Education has implemented reforms such as “Nghị quyết 29/NQ-TW” and “Công văn 2080/BGDĐT-GDDH” to enhance English skills at all levels of education. For non-English major students, English is crucial for accessing global knowledge and improving career prospects. With advances in educational technology, AI-powered tools like Quillbot offer significant support in improving writing skills through grammar correction, paraphrasing, and vocabulary enhancement. This study examines the use of Quillbot in the General English 3 course at Hoa Lu University, assessing its effectiveness in helping non-English major students develop better writing proficiency. By providing real-time feedback, Quillbot allows students to correct their mistakes and improve independently, addressing common writing challenges effectively (Ranalli, 2018).

2. Characteristics of Non-English Major Students

2.1. Uneven English Proficiency

Students enrolled in non-English major programs at Hoa Lu University come from a wide range of academic backgrounds, resulting in significant variations in their English proficiency levels. For example, students in majors such as Primary Education, Accounting, and Management generally have higher English proficiency compared to those in majors like Early Childhood Education and Tourism. This disparity is often due to differences in entrance exam requirements and prior exposure to English during their secondary education (Nguyễn, 2019).

Students with higher proficiency levels typically perform well across various language tasks. In contrast, students with lower proficiency levels struggle with basic aspects of language learning, particularly in writing, where they face challenges in constructing grammatically correct sentences and expressing complex ideas (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012). As a result, tools like Quillbot, which provide personalized feedback, become essential in helping students of all proficiency levels improve their writing skills.

2.2. Writing Challenges for Non-English Major Students

Writing is a particularly difficult skill for many non-English major students, largely due to their previous educational experiences, which focused on rote memorization and test preparation rather than developing practical writing skills (Nguyễn, 2019). Additionally, students are often unaccustomed to authentic writing tasks, having followed rigid, formulaic structures in high school. This makes university-level writing challenging, as it requires originality and coherence (Murphy, 2020). Tools like Quillbot provide valuable support by offering real-time feedback, helping students improve their writing independently and build confidence. Furthermore, Quillbot serves as an accessible resource for those who may not have access to writing centers or tutoring services.

2.3. The Role of English for Non-English Major Students

In today's globalized world, English proficiency is essential not just for English majors but for students across all disciplines (Harper, 2020). For

non-English major students in fields like **Tourism, Management, and Education**, strong English communication skills are vital for interacting with international communities and professional networks (Lotherington & Ronda, 2014). Many key resources, such as academic research and professional case studies, are available primarily in English, making strong reading and writing skills critical for success in their fields.

Additionally, English proficiency enhances critical thinking and problem-solving abilities by teaching students how to clearly and persuasively express ideas. As these students will need to write reports, proposals, and other documents in their careers, developing writing skills is crucial for both academic and professional growth (Ranalli, 2018).

2.4. Output Standards for General English 3

The General English 3 course at Hoa Lu University follows Vietnam's 6-level competency framework, where non-English major students are expected to reach Level 3 (B1), indicating intermediate proficiency. At this level, students should be able to produce clear, structured texts, describe experiences, and express opinions on familiar topics (Nghị quyết 29/NQ-TW, 2013). However, many students struggle to meet these standards, especially those with weaker writing skills (Murphy, 2020).

Instructors must offer significant support to help students improve. The challenge is further complicated by students' varied learning styles. A **flexible, student-centered approach**, incorporating technology, peer collaboration, and personalized feedback, is crucial for helping students meet the course's proficiency goals (Lotherington & Ronda, 2014).

2.5. Theoretical Framework for Teaching Writing Skills

2.5.1. Process Writing Approach

The Process Writing Approach emphasizes that writing is a recursive process that involves multiple stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. For non-English major students, breaking down the writing process into manageable stages can significantly reduce anxiety and improve their performance (Nguyễn, 2019). This approach encourages students to revise their work based on feedback from both peers and instructors, fostering a deeper engagement with the writing process.

2.5.2. Genre-Based Approach

The Genre-Based Approach focuses on teaching students how to write in specific genres, such as

academic essays, business reports, or reflective writing. This approach is particularly useful for non-English major students, as it helps them understand the conventions of different text types and how to apply them to their writing (Ranalli, 2018)... By providing clear models and examples, the genre-based approach helps students develop the skills they need to succeed in their respective fields.

2.5.3. Product-Based Approach

The Product-Based Approach is a traditional method where the focus is on the final product rather than the writing process. Students are given model texts to emulate, and the primary goal is to produce a grammatically correct, well-organized text. While this approach helps students with accuracy, it may limit creativity and critical thinking (Murphy, 2020). For students with weaker writing skills, this approach can serve as a valuable starting point.

2.5.4. Cognitive Writing Theory

Cognitive Writing Theory highlights the mental processes involved in writing, including planning, organizing, and revising. For non-English major students, teaching cognitive strategies can help them approach writing in a more structured and goal-oriented manner. By improving their ability to plan and organize their ideas, students can enhance the overall coherence and quality of their writing (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012).

2.6. The Use of Quillbot in Teaching Writing Skills

2.6.1. Paraphrasing Assistance

Quillbot's paraphrasing tool is especially useful for students who find it difficult to express the same idea in different ways, an essential skill in academic writing. Plagiarism often stems from an inability to properly rephrase sources, and Quillbot addresses this by providing alternative sentence structures while preserving the original meaning. This helps students avoid plagiarism, improve their paraphrasing abilities, and increase fluency in writing (Ranalli, 2018). By seeing how their ideas can be conveyed in various ways, students gain a deeper understanding of language and build confidence in their writing skills.

2.6.2. Grammar and Style Improvement

Maintaining correct grammar and writing style is a major challenge for non-English major students. Quillbot's grammar correction and sentence restructuring tools offer real-time support, allowing students to spot and fix mistakes as they write. This instant feedback is particularly helpful for those with

weaker grammar skills, helping them internalize correct usage through repetition. Over time, students recognize patterns in their errors, leading to improved grammatical accuracy. Additionally, Quillbot's sentence restructuring feature helps refine their writing by suggesting clearer and more polished sentences, essential for academic writing.

2.6.3. Vocabulary Enhancement

Quillbot's vocabulary enhancement feature addresses another common challenge faced by non-English major students: limited vocabulary. Students often rely on repetitive words, which can make their writing sound monotonous and simplistic. Quillbot's synonym suggestion tool encourages students to expand their vocabulary by offering alternatives to frequently used words. This not only improves the quality of their writing but also helps them develop a more sophisticated writing style. By using a broader range of vocabulary, students can make their writing more engaging and dynamic, which is essential for academic success. Additionally, learning new synonyms can aid in the overall development of students' language proficiency (Lotherington & Ronda, 2014).

2.6.4. Real-Time Feedback

A key advantage of Quillbot is its ability to offer real-time feedback, allowing students to immediately identify and correct their errors as they write. This instant feedback reinforces correct usage and encourages students to take a more active role in their learning by seeing the impact of their revisions right away. For teachers, Quillbot reduces the time spent on basic grammar corrections, allowing them to focus more on advanced writing skills like argument development and organization. This feature greatly enhances the overall quality of student writing for both learners and educators. (Harper, 2020)

2.7. Experimental Design

2.7.1. Participants

The study involved two classes of General English 3 students at Hoa Lu University, each consisting of 45 students, making a total of 90 participants. The participants were selected to represent a diverse range of non-English majors, including students from various fields such as education, tourism, pre education. The two classes were intentionally chosen to reflect the varied levels of English proficiency commonly found among non-English major students, ensuring that the findings of the study would be applicable to a wide range of learners

(Ranalli, 2018). The diversity in proficiency levels allowed the researchers to analyze how Quillbot supports students with different needs and challenges in writing.

2.7.2. Methodology

The students were divided into two groups: an experimental group using Quillbot and a control group following the traditional curriculum. Both groups completed pre-tests and post-tests, and qualitative feedback was gathered through surveys and interviews (Murphy, 2020).

To evaluate the effectiveness of Quillbot in improving writing skills, the participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group used Quillbot as a part of their writing instruction, while the control group followed the traditional writing curriculum without the use of Quillbot.

Before the experiment began, both groups completed a pre-test to assess their initial writing abilities. Over the course of the semester, students in the experimental group were encouraged to use Quillbot for revising and improving their writing assignments, while the control group received standard feedback from teachers. At the end of the semester, both groups completed a post-test to measure their progress.

In addition to quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests, the study also gathered qualitative insights through surveys and teacher interviews. These surveys asked students to reflect on their experiences using Quillbot, and teachers provided feedback on how the tool affected their teaching and the quality of student writing. This mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive analysis of both the measurable improvements in student performance and the subjective experiences of students and teachers.

2.8. Results

2.8.1. Quantitative Analysis

In the quantitative analysis, the experimental group showed a substantial improvement in their writing scores. On average, students in the experimental group demonstrated a 15% improvement from their pre-test to their post-test scores, compared to a 10% improvement in the control group (Ranalli, 2018). The areas that showed the most improvement in the experimental group were grammar and sentence structure, which aligns with Quillbot's strengths in providing real-time feedback and corrections in

these areas.

The data also revealed that students with lower proficiency levels benefited the most from using Quillbot. These students made significant gains in areas such as vocabulary usage and sentence coherence, which suggests that Quillbot's synonym suggestion and paraphrasing tools were particularly helpful in addressing the challenges faced by students with weaker language skills.

2.8.2. *Qualitative Feedback*

Student surveys and teacher interviews confirmed that Quillbot helped students identify and correct their mistakes more easily, leading to more well-structured and grammatically accurate essays (Murphy, 2020). Students in the experimental group found it easier to identify and correct their mistakes with the tool's instant feedback. Many noted that Quillbot helped them become more aware of common errors, such as grammar issues or awkward phrasing, allowing them to improve their writing gradually. Teachers also saw significant improvements in their students' writing, with the experimental group submitting more well-structured and grammatically correct essays than the control group. Additionally, Quillbot reduced the time teachers spent on basic error correction, enabling them to focus on higher-level writing skills like organization, argument development, and critical thinking.

2.9. *Discussion*

2.9.1. *Advantages of Using Quillbot*

The immediate feedback provided by Quillbot was a key advantage for both students and teachers (Harper, 2020). By offering real-time corrections, Quillbot helped students improve their writing independently, reducing their reliance on teachers for basic grammar and style corrections. This allowed students to take ownership of their learning and made them more confident in their writing abilities. For teachers, Quillbot eased the burden of correcting basic mistakes, enabling them to focus on more complex aspects of writing instruction.

Another advantage of Quillbot is its user-friendly interface, which made it accessible to all students, regardless of their technical proficiency. The vocabulary enhancement feature also proved to be beneficial, as it encouraged students to use more varied language and improve the overall quality of their writing.

2.9.2. *Challenges and Limitations*

Despite the many benefits, some challenges were observed in the use of Quillbot. A small

number of students became overly reliant on the tool, using it as a shortcut to avoid fully engaging with the writing process. Instead of learning from the feedback provided, these students would accept Quillbot's suggestions without fully understanding the underlying grammar or style rules (Lotherington & Ronda, 2014). This over-reliance limited their ability to internalize the corrections and apply them in future writing tasks.

To address this issue, teachers must ensure that students understand that Quillbot is a supplemental tool and not a replacement for active learning. It is important to encourage students to use Quillbot as a way to improve their writing, rather than as a way to bypass critical thinking and revision. Teachers should also provide guidance on how to use Quillbot effectively and integrate it with traditional instruction to ensure that students are developing independent writing skills.

3. *Conclusion*

The study demonstrates that Quillbot is a valuable tool for improving the writing skills of non-English major students in the General English 3 course at Hoa Lu University. The tool's ability to provide real-time feedback, support grammar correction, and enhance vocabulary was particularly beneficial for students with lower proficiency levels. However, to maximize the benefits of AI tools like Quillbot, it is essential to strike a balance between using technology and fostering independent writing skills (Harper, 2020).

The findings of this study suggest that Quillbot can play an important role in supporting writing instruction, especially for students who struggle with basic writing mechanics. Future research could explore the long-term impact of using AI-powered writing tools and investigate how they can be integrated with other instructional strategies, such as peer review, collaborative writing, and teacher feedback, to create a more comprehensive approach to developing writing proficiency.

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