

Enhancing paraphrasing skills in academic writing for STIE Pancasetia Banjarmasin students

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Abstract

This community service program was initiated to address the issue of high similarity rates in student theses at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) Pancasetia Banjarmasin. Despite the implementation of a maximum 40% similarity threshold using Turnitin, many students still struggle with exceeding this limit due to limited knowledge of proper paraphrasing techniques. The activity aimed to improve students' understanding of plagiarism, Turnitin software, and effective paraphrasing methods to enhance the originality of their academic work. The method used was an online webinar conducted via Zoom, involving social media dissemination, participant registration, presentation of material, and a discussion session. Participants were seventh-semester students currently writing their undergraduate theses. The results showed a high level of enthusiasm among students, who were eager to learn how to paraphrase properly to reduce similarity levels and meet Turnitin standards. The training increased their awareness of plagiarism and equipped them with practical skills to rephrase texts while preserving meaning and adhering to academic writing norms. In conclusion, this program significantly contributed to improving students' competence in academic writing and minimizing plagiarism. Future programs are recommended to focus on developing students' research ideas, strengthening their understanding of research methods, and enhancing citation skills through tools like Mendeley.

Keywords: paraphrasing technique, Turnitin, similarity index, academic writing, plagiarism prevention

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1. Introduction

Scientific writing is a structured piece of writing that presents ideas, reviews, observations, and research findings in a specific field. It follows a systematic methodology, proper language use, and contains content whose validity can be accounted for (Nirwana & Ruspa, 2020). Scientific writing in higher education includes various forms such as papers, working papers, undergraduate theses, master's theses, and dissertations. Each type of scientific work has a specific purpose and level of depth. A paper typically addresses empirical problems, a working paper explores topics more thoroughly, while a thesis and dissertation require independent research supported by strong theoretical and empirical foundations (Nirwana & Ruspa, 2020 in Arifin, 2003).

One major challenge in writing scientific work is plagiarism, a violation that universities in Indonesia are actively working to prevent. According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 17

of 2010, plagiarism is defined as "the act, whether intentional or unintentional, of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit or value for a scientific work by quoting, in whole or in part, another person's work and/or scientific work without stating the source properly and adequately" (Minister of National Education, 2010; Harliansyah, 2017). Plagiarism can be committed by individuals, groups, or institutions and comes in many forms, including paraphrasing without citation, using secondary sources without referencing the actual source, and even unethical collaboration practices (Harliansyah, 2017). These varied forms make it essential for students to deeply understand proper citation and paraphrasing techniques.

To uphold academic integrity, many universities—including Pancasetia College of Economics/ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) Pancasetia Banjarmasin—employ plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin. Turnitin works by comparing submitted work against vast online and institutional databases, identifying similarities, and calculating a similarity index. According to Risparyanto (2020), Turnitin serves as a formative writing tool to help reduce plagiarism and promote honest academic practices. At STIE Pancasetia, student theses are evaluated through Turnitin with an acceptable similarity threshold of 40%. However, in practice, many students' works exceed 60%, often due to poor paraphrasing skills.

This community service initiative was conducted to improve students' understanding of paraphrasing techniques and reduce the incidence of plagiarism in scientific writing. By enhancing paraphrasing skills, students can express ideas more originally, reduce similarity scores, and align with ethical academic standards.

2. Research Design and Method

This community service activity was conducted for seventh-semester students of Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) Pancasetia Banjarmasin who are currently working on their undergraduate theses. The method employed in this program was an online dissemination and training session conducted via the Zoom platform. The process began with the creation and distribution of promotional materials through social media platforms, specifically Instagram accounts @stiepanofficial and @habar.akademik, to inform and attract student participation. Registration for the webinar was managed through an online form accessible at the link bit.ly/pendaftaranwebinarparafrase. The main content of the session involved the presentation of material regarding paraphrasing techniques and academic writing, delivered live via Zoom using Meeting ID 913 395 7239. The session also included an interactive question-and-answer segment to engage participants and clarify key concepts, followed by a formal closing. This approach ensured that students could access the training remotely while maintaining the quality and objectives of the academic integrity awareness campaign.

3. Results and Discussion

This community service activity significantly contributed to enhancing students' knowledge of effective paraphrasing techniques to reduce similarity levels in academic writing, particularly in the preparation of undergraduate theses. Participants demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm throughout the webinar, actively engaging with the material presented. Their interest was evident from the questions raised during the discussion session, which mainly revolved around the correct procedures for paraphrasing, the distinction between paraphrasing and plagiarism, and the practical use of Turnitin as a tool for similarity checking.

During the presentation, students were introduced to common mistakes in paraphrasing, such as merely changing a few words without altering sentence structure or failing to properly cite sources. The session also covered several strategies for effective paraphrasing, including using synonyms appropriately, changing sentence structures, and summarizing ideas while maintaining the original meaning. Real-time

examples were used to compare original and paraphrased versions of academic text, which helped participants better understand the application of the techniques being taught.

The use of Turnitin was also explained in detail. Students were shown how Turnitin identifies similarity by highlighting matched phrases and linking them to the original sources. By understanding how the software functions, students became more aware of how improper paraphrasing could lead to high similarity scores. As a result, many students expressed greater confidence in applying paraphrasing techniques and indicated a willingness to revise their thesis drafts accordingly.

Overall, the webinar succeeded in raising awareness of academic integrity and equipping students with the practical skills needed to pass similarity checks using Turnitin. The knowledge gained through this activity is expected to not only help students complete their theses in compliance with institutional plagiarism policies but also to foster ethical academic writing practices in their future scholarly endeavors.

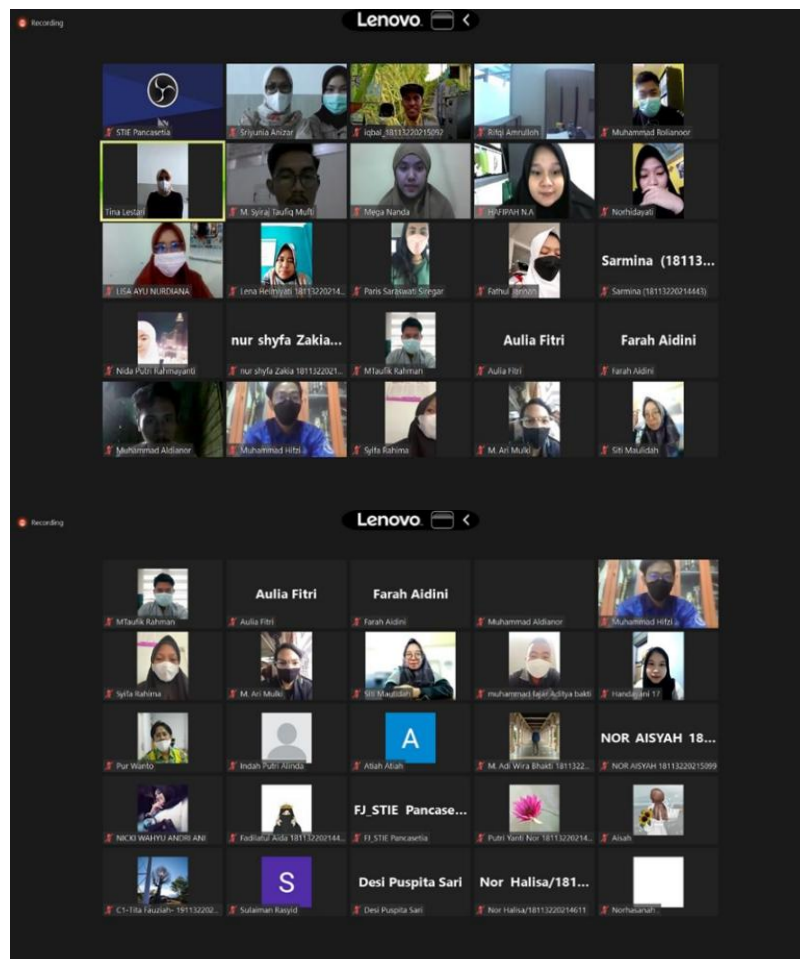


Figure 1. Documentation of Community Service Activities

4. Conclusions

This community service activity successfully enhanced students' understanding of plagiarism in academic writing, including in theses, dissertations, and publication journals. It also increased their awareness of Turnitin as a reliable similarity-checking tool and provided them with practical knowledge on how to paraphrase correctly and effectively. Through this webinar, students gained valuable insights into maintaining academic integrity and improving the originality of their work by applying proper paraphrasing techniques.

Future community service programs are encouraged to further support students by providing training on how to develop quality research ideas and innovations, deepen their knowledge of research methodologies aligned with their study focus, and improve their ability to manage references correctly using tools such as Microsoft Word and Mendeley. These efforts will collectively contribute to enhancing students' academic writing competence and research outcomes.

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