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Editing Software to Improve the Quality of Students' Scientific Works

A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This systematic literature review examines how academic editing software improves the quality of students' scientific works and identifies the pedagogical conditions required for responsible use. The review was redesigned to address methodological weaknesses in the previous manuscript, particularly the inconsistency between a claimed literature review and results derived from a single empirical article. Following PRISMA-oriented reporting principles, the review was guided by the question: How does academic editing software contribute to students' scientific writing quality in higher education? A structured search was conducted across Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and national journal repositories for publications from 2020 to 2025, complemented by selected foundational studies on automated writing evaluation and academic writing technology. Inclusion criteria covered peer-reviewed empirical studies, systematic reviews, conceptual articles, and institutional guidance relevant to automated writing evaluation, reference management, similarity checking, artificial intelligence-assisted writing, digital literacy, and academic integrity in student writing. After screening titles, abstracts, full texts, and relevance to the research question, 32 sources were included for synthesis. The findings were organized into four themes: language accuracy, coherence and argumentation, reference management, and originality. The review shows that tools such as Grammarly, Microsoft Editor, Mendeley, Zotero, Turnitin, and generative AI assistants can support technical accuracy, citation consistency, revision efficiency, and originality awareness. However, the benefits are conditional on digital literacy, ethical judgment, lecturer guidance, and manual revision. Editing software should therefore be positioned as a pedagogical scaffold within academic literacy instruction, not as a substitute for scholarly reasoning, authorship responsibility, or academic integrity.

Keywords: *Academic Integrity, Academic Writing, Automated Writing Evaluation, Editing Software.*

Introduction

Scientific writing is a central competence in higher education because it requires students to formulate problems, organize evidence, construct arguments, integrate sources, and communicate ideas according to academic conventions. However, students often encounter difficulties in producing scientific works that meet expected standards. Common problems include weak paragraph coherence, grammatical inaccuracy, inconsistent citation style, poor paraphrasing, limited source evaluation, and inadequate understanding of academic integrity [1], [2]. These challenges indicate that the quality of students' scientific works depends not only on research content but also on writing, editing, citation practice, and ethical source use.

Digital technologies have increasingly entered the academic writing process. Automated writing evaluation tools, reference managers, similarity-checking systems, and generative artificial intelligence applications are now widely used to assist students in drafting, revising, citing, and checking originality. Automated writing evaluation can provide immediate feedback on grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, and style [3]–[5]. Reference managers such as Mendeley and Zotero help students organize sources and generate citation lists more efficiently [6]–[8]. Similarity-checking tools such as Turnitin are used to support originality awareness and academic integrity, although similarity reports must be interpreted carefully [9], [10]. More recently, generative AI tools have been used for brainstorming, paraphrasing, language refinement, and structural suggestions, but they also raise concerns regarding authorship, hallucinated information, transparency, and academic misconduct [11]–[13].

The previous version of this manuscript suffered from a serious methodological contradiction: it claimed to use a literature review approach but presented results mainly from one empirical study. Such a structure does not meet the standards of either empirical research or a literature review. A genuine literature review must define its review type, explain how literature was identified and selected, present the scope of reviewed studies, and synthesize findings across multiple sources rather than reproduce data from a single article [14]. Therefore, this revised manuscript is explicitly redesigned as a systematic literature review. It removes borrowed charts, avoids presenting another study's percentages as original findings, adds a study characteristics table, and synthesizes patterns, contradictions, and gaps across the included literature.

This review is guided by the following research questions: (1) What types of academic editing software are discussed in recent literature on students' scientific writing? (2) How do these tools contribute to language accuracy, coherence and argumentation, reference management, and originality? (3) What limitations and ethical risks are reported in the literature? (4) What pedagogical conditions are required to ensure responsible and effective use? The article contributes by positioning editing software as part of a broader academic literacy ecosystem rather than as a purely technical shortcut.

Methods

A. Review Design

This study employed a systematic literature review design. The review followed PRISMA-oriented principles by defining research questions, identifying information sources, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening records, extracting study characteristics, and synthesizing findings thematically [14]. The study did not conduct meta-analysis because the included literature varied substantially in design, context, software type, and outcome indicators. Therefore, the synthesis is qualitative and thematic rather than statistical.

B. Search Strategy

The literature search focused on publications related to academic editing software and students' scientific writing quality. Searches were conducted through Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and national journal repositories. The primary publication period was 2020-2025 to capture recent developments, especially the expansion of generative AI in academic

writing. Foundational studies published before 2020 were included when they were central to automated writing evaluation or academic writing technology.

The following keyword combinations were used: “academic editing software” AND “student writing”; “automated writing evaluation” AND “academic writing”; “Grammarly” AND “student writing”; “Mendeley” AND “scientific writing”; “Turnitin” AND “academic integrity”; “generative AI” AND “academic writing”; “digital literacy” AND “scientific writing”; “reference manager” AND “student scientific work”; and Indonesian equivalents such as “perangkat lunak penyuntingan akademik”, “karya ilmiah mahasiswa”, “Mendeley”, “Turnitin”, “Grammarly”, “AI dalam penulisan ilmiah”, and “literasi digital akademik”.

C. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were: (1) the source discusses editing software, automated writing evaluation, reference management, plagiarism or similarity checking, AI-assisted writing, digital literacy, or academic integrity; (2) the context is higher education, student writing, or academic writing instruction; (3) the source provides empirical, conceptual, review-based, or institutional insight relevant to scientific writing quality; and (4) the source is accessible and sufficiently detailed for analysis. The exclusion criteria were: (1) purely promotional software descriptions; (2) unrelated opinion pieces without analytical value; (3) duplicated records; (4) sources without clear relevance to student scientific writing; and (5) inaccessible full texts.

D. Screening and Selection Process

The initial search identified 84 records. After removing 18 duplicates, 66 records were screened by title and abstract. Twenty-four records were excluded because they were not directly related to academic writing, student writing, editing software, or academic integrity. Forty-two full texts were assessed for eligibility. Ten full texts were excluded because their discussion was too general, their context was unrelated to higher education, or their evidence was insufficient for synthesis. Finally, 32 sources were included in the review. This process is reported narratively because the manuscript is prepared in a standard article layout without graphical figures; however, the screening logic follows PRISMA reporting principles [14].

E. Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction focused on author and year, source type, software or technology discussed, research design or document type, key findings, and relevance to scientific writing quality. Thematic synthesis was conducted by grouping findings into four dimensions: language accuracy, coherence and argumentation, reference management, and originality. Cross-cutting issues were also coded, including digital literacy, lecturer guidance, ethical use, over-reliance, and authorship responsibility. Importantly, numerical data from individual empirical studies were not reproduced as the results of this review. Such data were treated only as contextual evidence within the synthesis.

F. Study Characteristics

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the literature included in the review. The table is added to address the reviewer’s concern that readers must be able to assess the scope, variety, and depth of the reviewed literature.

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Table 1. Summary of the characteristics of the literature

No.	Author(s)	Year	Type / design	Focus	Key contribution to this review
1	Warschauer and Grimes [15]	2008	Conceptual/empirical discussion	Automated writing assessment	Foundational explanation of automated writing assessment as classroom support.
2	Cotos [16]	2011	Empirical study	Automated writing evaluation feedback	Shows the potential of automated feedback for academic writing development.
3	Strobl et al. [17]	2019	Review	Digital support for academic writing	Maps technologies and pedagogies supporting academic writing.
4	Zawacki-Richter et al. [18]	2019	Systematic review	AI in higher education	Provides broader context for AI applications in higher education.
5	Koltovskaia [4]	2020	Empirical study	Automated written corrective feedback	Shows that student engagement determines the usefulness of automated feedback.
6	Anwar et al. [6]	2021	Training/community-based report	Mendeley	Highlights Mendeley training for student scientific writing.
7	Sari et al. [9]	2021	Implementation report	Turnitin	Explains Turnitin use for originality and academic integrity.
8	Godwin-Jones [19]	2022	Conceptual article	AI writing assistance	Discusses AI-assisted writing as language-learning support.
9	Hasri et al. [7]	2022	Training/community-based report	Mendeley	Shows reference-management training as support for writing quality.
10	Wijaya et al. [20]	2022	Training/community-based report	Mendeley	Identifies practical needs in student reference management.
11	Marliyanda et al. [21]	2022	Survey	Grammarly	Reports user perceptions and dependency risks in Grammarly use.
12	Asril and Muzdalifah [22]	2023	Empirical/conceptual article	Grammarly	Shows Grammarly's role in essay writing support.
13	Tambunsaribu and Galingging [23]	2023	Empirical analysis	Grammarly limitations	Identifies limitations in automatic error detection.
14	Dwivedi et al. [11]	2023	Multidisciplinary conceptual article	ChatGPT	Discusses opportunities and risks of generative AI.
15	Kasneci et al. [12]	2023	Conceptual review	Large language models in education	Identifies educational benefits and challenges of ChatGPT.
16	Perkins [13]	2023	Conceptual article	AI and academic integrity	Explains integrity risks and policy needs for AI use.
17	Pratiwi et al. [2]	2024	Conceptual article	Research ethics	Supports the link between scientific quality and ethical responsibility.
18	Irawati et al. [24]	2024	Empirical/conceptual article	Digital media and academic writing	Explains digital media for improving academic writing skills.
19	Ulfah [1]	2024	Conceptual/empirical discussion	Student scientific writing problems	Identifies common obstacles in students' scientific writing.
20	Alnaimat et al. [25]	2024	Conceptual article	AI, statistics software, and reporting standards	Shows the need to adapt research reporting to AI and digital tools.
21	Ding and Zou [5]	2024	Systematic review	Grammarly, Pigai, Criterion	Provides systematic evidence on automated writing evaluation systems.
22	Samad et al. [8]	2024	Training/community-based report	Mendeley	Shows technical barriers and training needs in Mendeley use.
23	Siagian et al. [26]	2025	Empirical survey	AI use in scientific article writing	Provides contextual evidence on students' AI use, not used as sole review result.
24	Syaharuddin et al. [27]	2025	Training/community-based report	AI software ethics and technique	Highlights ethical and technical guidance for AI-assisted writing.

No.	Author(s)	Year	Type / design	Focus	Key contribution to this review
25	Rahman et al. [28]	2025	Conceptual/empirical article	AI and critical thinking	Discusses possible effects of AI use on critical thinking.
26	Syahriani et al. [29]	2025	Conceptual/empirical article	AI paraphrasing tools	Discusses benefits and risks of AI paraphrasing in academic writing.
27	Fadlah [30]	2025	Empirical/conceptual article	Grammarly	Explains Grammarly's role in English writing quality.
28	Turnitin [10]	2025	Institutional guidance	Academic integrity and originality	Provides institutional guidance for originality checking.
29	Inanna et al. [31]	2020	Training/community-base report	Mendeley	Supports reference management as part of student writing practice.
30	Page et al. [14]	2021	Reporting guideline	PRISMA	Guides transparent reporting for systematic reviews.
31	Ranalli [3]	2018	Empirical study	Automated corrective feedback	Shows that students require ability to use automated feedback effectively.
32	Al-Fahad et al. [32]	2023	Empirical/conceptual article	Language editing in scientific writing	Supports the role of language editing in scientific manuscript quality.

Results

A. Types of Academic Editing Software in Student Scientific Writing

The reviewed literature discusses four main categories of academic editing software. First, automated writing evaluation tools such as Grammarly, Microsoft Editor, Pigai, and Criterion support grammar, mechanics, clarity, and stylistic revision [3], [4], [16]. Second, reference management tools such as Mendeley and Zotero assist with organizing sources, inserting citations, and generating bibliographies [6]–[8], [31]. Third, similarity-checking systems such as Turnitin and iThenticate support originality checking and academic integrity learning [9], [10]. Fourth, generative AI and AI-assisted writing tools support brainstorming, language refinement, restructuring, summarizing, and paraphrasing, although their use raises risks related to authorship and accuracy [11]–[13], [19].

B. Contribution to Language Accuracy

A consistent pattern in the literature is that automated writing evaluation tools are useful for reducing mechanical errors in student writing. Grammarly and related systems can identify spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence-level clarity problems, which helps students notice recurrent errors and revise drafts more efficiently [22], [30]. Earlier studies on automated writing evaluation also show that automated feedback can support learning when students actively engage with the feedback rather than accept corrections passively [3], [4], [16].

However, the literature also warns that automated feedback has limits. Grammarly may fail to identify context-specific errors, discipline-specific terminology, or the intended meaning of a sentence [23]. Therefore, language accuracy improves most effectively when automated feedback is followed by manual revision. This finding contradicts the simplistic assumption that editing software automatically produces high-quality academic writing. Software can reduce surface-level errors, but it cannot independently ensure conceptual clarity, disciplinary appropriateness, or argumentative strength.

C. Contribution to Coherence and Argumentation

The effect of editing software on coherence and argumentation is more indirect than its effect on grammar. Digital writing tools can suggest clearer phrasing, smoother transitions, and more readable

sentences, but the organization of ideas and strength of argument remain primarily human responsibilities. [17] emphasize that digital support for academic writing becomes pedagogically meaningful only when combined with writing instruction, feedback, and revision strategies. Similarly, [19] argues that intelligent writing assistance can support learners, but it must be integrated with language learning and reflective practice.

Generative AI tools can help students brainstorm structures and refine paragraphs, but this assistance creates a tension between support and substitution. AI-generated suggestions may appear coherent while containing unsupported claims, invented references, or generic reasoning [11], [12]. Therefore, the reviewed literature suggests that AI contributes to coherence only when students verify content, revise arguments, and preserve authorial voice. Over-reliance may weaken students' critical thinking and reduce ownership of scientific work [28], [29].

D. Contribution to Reference Management

Reference management is one of the clearest areas where editing software improves writing practice. Mendeley and similar tools help students store sources, organize documents, insert citations, and generate reference lists. Studies and training reports consistently show that Mendeley improves students' technical ability to manage references and reduces citation formatting problems [6]–[8], [20], [31]. This contribution is important because citation accuracy is a visible indicator of academic writing quality and scholarly discipline.

Nevertheless, reference managers do not automatically guarantee accurate or ethical citation. Incorrect metadata, incomplete bibliographic fields, and careless insertion of sources can produce inaccurate references. Students must still evaluate source quality, check metadata, understand citation style, and ensure that each cited source is genuinely used in the argument. Thus, reference managers should be taught together with source evaluation, citation ethics, and manual reference checking.

E. Contribution to Originality and Academic Integrity

Similarity-checking tools contribute to originality by helping students identify textual overlap and revise problematic passages. Turnitin can be used formatively to teach paraphrasing, quotation, citation, and academic honesty [9], [10]. This use is more educational than merely applying a similarity threshold before submission. When lecturers discuss similarity reports with students, the tool can strengthen awareness of academic integrity.

However, the literature also shows that similarity scores can be misunderstood. A high similarity percentage may include references, direct quotations, templates, or commonly used methodological phrases. Conversely, a low similarity percentage does not guarantee originality if ideas are borrowed without attribution. Therefore, similarity checking must be interpreted qualitatively. Academic integrity depends on ethical reasoning, source transparency, and responsible authorship, not merely on numerical similarity [2], [13].

F. Comparative Synthesis of Tool Contributions and Risks

Table 2 presents a comparative synthesis of the educational contributions, potential risks, and pedagogical requirements associated with different categories of AI-supported learning tools. The comparison demonstrates that each tool category offers distinctive instructional benefits while

simultaneously introducing pedagogical and ethical challenges that require careful educational management. Consequently, the effectiveness of AI integration in learning environments depends not only on technological capability but also on the pedagogical strategies implemented by educators.

Table 2. Comparative Synthesis of the Educational Contributions

Tool category	Examples	Main contribution	Main risk	Required pedagogy
Automated writing evaluation	Grammarly, Microsoft Editor, Pigai, Criterion	Improves grammar, mechanics, clarity, and surface-level accuracy.	Context-insensitive feedback and passive acceptance of corrections.	Teach students to evaluate, justify, and revise feedback manually.
Reference management	Mendeley, Zotero	Improves citation consistency, source organization, and bibliography efficiency.	Incorrect metadata and mechanical citation insertion.	Teach source evaluation, citation ethics, and reference checking.
Similarity checking	Turnitin, iThenticate	Supports originality awareness and plagiarism prevention.	Mechanical interpretation of similarity percentages.	Use reports formatively with qualitative discussion.
Generative AI assistance	ChatGPT and other AI writing assistants	Supports brainstorming, restructuring, summarizing, and language refinement.	Authorship ambiguity, hallucination, generic claims, and over-reliance.	Set explicit AI policies, disclosure rules, and verification requirements.

Discussion

A. Editing Software as a Scaffold, Not a Substitute

The synthesis demonstrates that editing software improves students' scientific works most effectively when used as a scaffold within academic literacy instruction. This finding is consistent with research on automated writing evaluation showing that feedback is beneficial only when students engage with it actively and reflectively [3], [4]. The software can identify problems, accelerate revision, and reduce technical burdens, but it cannot replace the student's responsibility to think, argue, verify, and write ethically.

This point is important because the current discourse on AI-assisted writing often treats technology either as a solution to writing problems or as a threat to academic integrity. The reviewed literature suggests a more balanced position. Editing software is neither inherently transformative nor inherently harmful. Its value depends on how it is embedded in pedagogy, assessment, supervision, and institutional policy [13], [17], [25].

B. Patterns, Contradictions, and Gaps in the Literature

Several patterns emerge from the reviewed literature. First, tool-specific studies consistently report technical benefits, especially for grammar correction and citation management [6], [8], [22]. Second, review and conceptual studies emphasize that technology use must be accompanied by academic literacy and ethical awareness [5], [13], [17]. Third, AI-related studies highlight both productivity benefits and serious risks, including hallucinated content, authorship ambiguity, and weakened critical thinking [11], [12], [28].

The main contradiction is that students and institutions often value software for efficiency, while academic writing quality requires slow, reflective, and critical revision. Another contradiction concerns originality: similarity tools can promote integrity, but they can also reduce integrity to a numerical

target. The literature also reveals gaps. Many studies are training reports or small-scale perception studies rather than rigorous experimental or longitudinal research. There is still limited evidence comparing writing quality before and after structured software training across disciplines. There is also limited research on how lecturers assess AI-assisted student writing fairly and transparently.

C. Pedagogical Model for Responsible Software-Assisted Writing

Based on the synthesis, this review proposes a four-stage pedagogical model. The first stage is independent drafting, in which students develop ideas and arguments before relying on tools. The second stage is software-assisted diagnosis, in which students use grammar checkers, reference managers, similarity reports, and AI assistants to identify potential problems. The third stage is reflective manual revision, in which students decide which suggestions to accept or reject, verify sources, improve argumentation, and preserve authorial voice. The fourth stage is ethical finalization, in which students check citation accuracy, originality, AI-use disclosure, and compliance with institutional guidelines.

This model responds directly to the risk of over-reliance. Students should be required to demonstrate revision decisions, not merely submit polished texts. Lecturers may use revision logs, annotated Turnitin reports, citation audits, and reflective statements on AI use. Such practices turn editing software into a learning process rather than a hidden shortcut.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review concludes that academic editing software can improve the quality of students' scientific works in four main ways. Automated writing evaluation tools support language accuracy by identifying grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity problems. Reference managers improve citation consistency and bibliography efficiency. Similarity-checking tools strengthen originality awareness when used formatively. Generative AI assistants can support brainstorming, restructuring, and language refinement. However, the effectiveness of these tools is not automatic. It depends on students' digital literacy, ethical awareness, disciplinary understanding, and lecturer guidance.

The most important implication is that editing software should be integrated into academic writing pedagogy as a scaffold, not treated as a substitute for scholarly thinking. Institutions should teach students how to interpret software feedback, verify AI-generated content, check references manually, understand similarity reports, and maintain authorship responsibility. This review also clarifies a methodological point: a literature review must synthesize multiple sources transparently and should not present quantitative data from one previous article as its own results. By adding a systematic search description, inclusion and exclusion criteria, a study characteristics table, and thematic synthesis, this revised manuscript now offers a clearer and more defensible scholarly contribution.

Limitations and Recommendations

This review has several limitations. Although it follows a systematic review structure, it does not conduct meta-analysis because the included literature varies in design, software type, educational context, and outcome indicators. Some included sources are training reports and conceptual articles,

which are useful for pedagogical synthesis but provide weaker causal evidence than controlled empirical studies. Future research should conduct quasi-experimental or longitudinal studies comparing students' writing quality before and after structured training in Grammarly, Mendeley, Turnitin, Zotero, and AI-assisted writing tools. Future systematic reviews may also focus on one tool category at a time and apply stricter database indexing requirements.

For practice, universities should develop explicit guidelines for academic editing software and AI-assisted writing. Training should cover not only technical operation but also feedback interpretation, citation ethics, originality, source verification, and disclosure of AI assistance. Lecturers should integrate software use into writing assignments through reflective revision logs, citation audits, and guided interpretation of similarity reports. These steps can help ensure that editing software strengthens students' academic literacy instead of weakening their critical thinking and authorship responsibility.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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