Grammarly in Essay Writing through the Lens of Students' Perception

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Grammarly serves as an online grammar checker that allows users to identify and rectify errors in grammar, pronunciation, punctuation, and plagiarism. This study aims to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through questionnaires and structured interviews. The participants were English major students at Universitas PGRI Jombang enrolled in essay writing classes, with 23 students responding to the questionnaires and 4 participating in interviews. The findings indicate a positive perception among students towards Grammarly as a helpful tool for writing English essays. They appreciate its user-friendly interface, helpful advice, clear explanations, accurate grammar checks, and prompt corrections. Moreover, they find it beneficial for enhancing writing skills and boosting self-confidence, particularly in essay writing. The study also highlights Grammarly's role in facilitating learning about English grammar rules. Despite utilizing only the free version, nearly all students highly recommend Grammarly for supporting English students in essay writing. They value its straightforward feedback, which aids in understanding complex grammar issues and enables them to refine their writing while reducing common errors. In conclusion, students consider Grammarly a valuable tool for enhancing their essay writing skills. Not only does it assist in correcting grammatical errors, but it also serves as an educational resource that enriches students' understanding of English grammar. Therefore, integrating Grammarly into the essay writing curriculum can greatly benefit English students, providing them with an accessible and effective resource to improve their writing proficiency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Grammarly functions as an online grammar checker and serves as an invaluable tool in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. It aids in assessing writing by allowing users to identify and correct various errors related to grammar and punctuation. Grammarly is widely recognized for its comprehensive online proofreading capabilities, which include checking grammar, pronunciation, punctuation, and even identifying potential instances of plagiarism (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018). Understanding the intricacies of grammar and its integration into computer software like Grammarly can greatly assist teachers in enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning English. By pinpointing errors and offering constructive feedback, Grammarly supports educators in providing precise and immediate corrections to students' written work (Syafi'i, 2020). This not only improves the overall quality of students' writing but also boosts their confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English.

Furthermore, Grammarly's user-friendly interface and real-time feedback mechanisms make it an exceptionally convenient and accessible resource for students. Its ability to provide instant corrections and explanations allows students to address grammatical issues promptly, which is crucial for language learning. The instant feedback helps students learn from their mistakes, understand the rules of grammar better, and apply this knowledge to future writing tasks. Consequently, the use of Grammarly in EFL classes contributes significantly to enhancing students' academic performance. It provides a reliable and supportive tool that aids in honing their language and writing competencies. By continually using Grammarly, students can progressively improve their writing skills, resulting in more accurate and effective communication in English. This tool not only facilitates immediate correction of errors but also serves as an educational aid that enriches the students' understanding of the language, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes and greater self-assurance in their writing abilities.

Writing is one of the major skills in English, considered an active or productive skill (Seyoum, Yigzaw, & Bewuketu, 2022). It requires individuals to convey their thoughts, ideas, and information through written text, necessitating not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to organize thoughts logically and present them coherently. Whether it is composing essays or reports, honing writing skills enhances one's ability to communicate effectively in various contexts. In essay classes, Grammarly serves as an invaluable resource for students, assisting them in refining their writing skills by offering instant corrections and suggestions. This fosters a deeper understanding of grammar rules and sentence structure. By using Grammarly, students can identify and rectify errors while gaining insights into the intricacies of language mechanics. This empowers them to produce well-structured, grammatically accurate sentences, enabling them to convey their thoughts with clarity and precision, which is essential for success in any writing endeavour. The tool's real-time feedback helps students to learn from their mistakes, thereby improving their overall writing proficiency and boosting their confidence in their writing abilities.

Despite the widespread use of Grammarly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, research on its impact on students' ability to logically organize and present their thoughts in writing is limited. While Grammarly is known for correcting grammar and punctuation, it affects essay coherence and organization. This study aims to know the students' perceptions regarding Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. By integrating Grammarly into essay writing classes, the research seeks to understand its broader educational benefits, particularly in helping students develop clear, well-structured written communication. The findings aim to provide insights for educators on enhancing EFL students' writing proficiency and confidence through digital tools.

1.1. Perception

Perception is the process by which an individual select, organizes, and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful overall conception (Kotler, 2000). It is the mental process by which an individual chooses, arranges, and comprehends the information they receive to form a coherent and meaningful understanding of their surroundings. This involves selecting relevant details, organizing them into a structured framework, and then interpreting them to create a coherent perception of the world. This statement aligns with Apriani, Anshori, and Edy (2019), who described perception as the process by which an individual gives meaning to their surroundings. Perception refers to how individuals interpret and make sense of sensory information from their environment. It involves evaluating concepts acquired through learning to gauge one's stance on a particular matter, which may include agreement or disagreement with the approach or subject matter (Jaelani & Rahmah, 2019). Essentially, learners formulate their unique viewpoints based on educational experiences, influencing their approach. These viewpoints, defined as students' perceptions, encapsulate how learners interpret occurrences within the learning journey, whether in the classroom or beyond. These perceptions subsequently generate suggestions or discussions that can aid teachers and peers in enhancing the learning process. These insights pave the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the various factors that contribute to a student's perspective, such as cultural background, personal beliefs, and prior experiences, which together shape the lens through which individuals perceive and interact with educational content.

Individuals may perceive the same sensory input in diverse ways, and this disparity arises from the distinct manner in which each person's brain processes stimuli. This process hinges on an individual's unique blend of learning, memory, emotions, and expectations. Consequently, when individuals are presented with the same image, it is not uncommon to elicit two or more distinct responses when they describe their perceptions. In essence, people possess the capacity to interpret things differently, giving rise to a multitude of perspectives. For instance, in a classroom setting where students are studying English, each student may hold a distinct perception of the teaching and learning process. These varied perceptions arise from differences in their backgrounds, prior language learning experiences, and personal expectations. Thus, within the context of English language education, students often form a wide array of ideas and viewpoints based on their individual perceptions. This research aims to understand students' perceptions regarding their experience in Essay Writing when using Grammarly.

1.2. Grammarly

Bouchoux (2019) stated that there are simple and free tools available for users to enhance their English writing skills, such as Grammarly, an online grammar checker. It helps assess writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, allowing users to identify grammar and punctuation mistakes. This tool is one of the online grammar checkers for assessing the quality of a writing. It is a website for online proofreading that users can utilize to check for errors such as grammar, pronunciation, punctuation, and identification of plagiarism (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018). According to Pratama (2020), this software has two versions that are often used to check writing errors, namely as follows:

- The free version of Grammarly may have limited features, but it remains a valuable tool for users, particularly writers who seek assistance in rectifying common or fundamental errors frequently encountered in their written work. This version encompasses essential components, primarily focusing on aspects related to correctness, including spell checking, grammar, and punctuation (Dewi, 2023). Furthermore, the free edition is proficient in pinpointing minor grammatical issues, such as the incorrect usage of commas and misplacement of articles. In practical terms, students can utilize it to assess the grammar in documents comprising up to 500 words. Whenever typos occur, the program promptly identifies them and draws attention to them by highlighting them in red, while also offering the necessary corrections. Importantly, users of the free version can still establish writing goals, specifying factors such as target domains and intended audiences. This feature aids in tailoring suggestions to meet the specific needs of the user, enhancing its utility for individuals looking to improve their writing accuracy and effectiveness.
- Grammarly Premium, the paid version of the service, offers more features and benefits than its free counterpart. The premium edition includes at least eight features, encompassing correctness, clarity, engagement, style, presentation, plagiarism detection, goal setting based on domain, formality, audience, and intent, along with an overall score of the writing results (Ummah & Bisriyah, 2022). While the free version has a document revision limit of 500 words, the premium version allows users to edit full text. Additionally, it can detect errors in 250 grammar rules (Rahma, 2021). Providing more personalization options based on writing type and user preferences, it allows customization to meet individual writing needs, including style, language, and grammar preferences. Furthermore, Grammarly Premium has various applications and platforms, such as Microsoft Word and Chrome, making it highly flexible and easily integrated into any platform. It enables users to utilize the tool more efficiently while writing on various platforms.
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1.3. Essay Writing

Essay writing is a cornerstone of academic and professional communication, offering individuals a platform to express their ideas, analyze concepts, and persuade audiences. In this comprehensive exploration of essay writing, we as researchers delve into its significance, structure, and diverse forms, supported by insights from renowned scholars. According to Smalley & Ruetten (1986), the essay writing activity involves composing a paragraph and developing it around an idea or topic that is explored through a fairly limited paragraph. Essay writing is a structured and creative process of expressing ideas, arguments, or information in written form. It is a common form of academic and professional communication, playing a crucial role in various aspects of education, research, and communication. Essays can take many forms, including expository, argumentative, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive essays, each with its own purpose and style. In essay writing, individuals typically follow a structured format, which often includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The introduction serves to provide an overview of the topic and establish the thesis statement or main argument of the essay. The body paragraphs present evidence, examples, and analysis to support the thesis, and the conclusion summarizes the main points and restates the thesis concisely.

Bailey (2011) stated that Essays are the currency of the university. They are for assessment in almost every subject at university. It is not enough to have a great idea; one has to be able to communicate it. He emphasizes the fundamental importance of essays in academia. Essays serve as a means of assessment across various disciplines, requiring students to articulate their thoughts effectively and demonstrate their understanding of course material. An essay is a piece of writing that is written to convince someone of something or to simply inform the reader about a particular topic (Byrne, 1988). This definition highlights the dual purpose of essays: persuasion and information dissemination. To achieve these objectives, essays typically follow a structured format, comprising an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Essay writing transcends mere academic exercise; it is a skill that fosters critical thinking, effective communication, and intellectual growth. By understanding its significance, mastering its structure, and exploring its diverse forms, individuals can harness the power of essays to express themselves eloquently and influence others profoundly.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative methodology for collecting and analysing data. Qualitative research is particularly effective for exploring social problems by delving into personal views, which helps in gaining a profound understanding of the subject being studied. The specific type of this study is a case study, which is a qualitative methodology designed to investigate the various factors that influence the progress or development of a particular object or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). According to Cohen et al. (2007), a case study places emphasis on individuals and their reactions in specific situations, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding

of the subject matter. Given these characteristics, the researchers deemed the case study method appropriate for examining students' perceptions of using Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of how students select, organize, and interpret the tool's suggestions. The research process involved formulating questions, gathering data from the subjects, inductively analysing the data, interpreting the findings, and presenting the results in a clear and coherent manner (Creswell, 2014). This methodical approach ensures that the study captures the nuanced experiences and perceptions of the students, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of Grammarly as a tool for enhancing essay writing skills. By thoroughly investigating these aspects, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how digital writing aids can be integrated into educational settings to support student learning and development.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

Based on the data collected from questionnaire, the researchers present the findings of the study aimed at addressing research questions concerning students' perceptions of using Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. The research was conducted at Universitas PGRI Jombang. The questionnaire was distributed to English Education students via Google Forms and the researcher received responses from 23 participants who utilized Grammarly to check grammar mistakes in their essay writing. The questionnaire, comprising nine questions, employed close-ended queries to gather data, offering respondents five alternative answers: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree.

Table 1. The Result of the Data Collection using Questionnaire

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students' awareness of Grammarly to support their essay writing	4.3%	8.7%	21.7%	43.5%	21.7%
Students' perceptions of the usefulness of Grammarly in writing their English essays					
I think Grammarly is really easy to use for writing my essay	4.3%	8.7%	34.8%	30.4%	21.7%
Grammarly makes helpful suggestions for improving my English essay writing	4.3%	4.3%	34.8%	39.1%	17.4%
Grammarly gives good explanations for my errors in writing my essay	8.7%	4.3%	30.4%	39.1%	17.4%
I like to use Grammarly because it has a 100% accuracy rate in checking my grammar errors compared to any other grammar checker tools	8.7%	8.7%	30.4%	43.5%	8.7%
I think Grammarly has faster correction than any other grammar checker tools that I know	4.3%	4.3%	43.5%	30.4%	17.4%
Students' perceptions of the usefulness of Grammarly in improving their writing skills					
Grammarly is highly beneficial for improving my writing abilities, especially when it comes to writing English essays	4.3%	4.3%	8.7%	34.8%	47.8%
Grammarly boosts my confidence when writing English essays	8.7%	4.3%	39.1%	43.5%	4.3%
I believe Grammarly has assisted me in gaining a better understanding of English grammar rules	4.3%	4.3%	43.5%	34.8%	13%

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is evident that nearly all students agree or strongly agree that Grammarly is the preferred grammar checker application they use to assist them in their essay writing. Firstly, the responses to statements number 2 to 6 indicate students' positive perceptions of using Grammarly as a writing assistant to support their essay writing. They find its suggestions to be clear, easy to understand, user-friendly, accurate in terms of grammar, and Grammarly is capable of quickly correcting mistakes. Secondly, the responses to statements number 7 to 9 suggest that students express their views on how the tool aids in enhancing their English writing skills, particularly in essay writing. They believe it contributes to the development of their English writing skills, boosts their confidence in essay writing, and enhances their understanding of English grammar rules.

The majority of students agree or strongly agree that it is beneficial in supporting them with their English essays. However, a small number of students either express neutrality, disagreement, or difficulty in using it. While almost all students agree or strongly agree that it provides helpful suggestions for improving their essay writing, a few students express disagreement or difficulty in understanding its explanations. Some students also question its claim of 100% grammar accuracy. Regarding its speed of correction and document-checking feature, most students agree or strongly agree that it offers faster corrections compared to other grammar proofing tools. Despite some neutrality, students generally acknowledge its effectiveness in improving their writing skills and increasing their confidence in writing English essays. However, opinions vary regarding whether it helps in gaining a better understanding of English grammar rules, with some students expressing disagreement, neutrality, or uncertainty.

In summary, while the majority of students recognize the benefits of using it for their essay writing, there are differing opinions on its effectiveness in certain aspects, such as explanation clarity and grammar accuracy. Nevertheless, it remains a widely utilized tool among students for enhancing their English writing skills and confidence in essay writing.

Table 2. The Result of the Interview

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Convenience and User-friendliness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Real-time Feedback and Suggestions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Confidence Boost	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Augmenting Understanding of Grammar Rules	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall Positive Impact	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Iinterviews were conducted with four participants to delve deeper into their perceptions of the tool's efficacy in improving their essay writing skills within an English class setting. Each participant provided valuable insights into their experiences, attitudes, and preferences regarding the use of Grammarly as a writing tool. Participant responses highlighted several key themes. Firstly, participants unanimously praised the convenience and user-friendliness of the tool's interface. They found it easy to navigate and appreciated its intuitive design, which streamlined their writing process. Many participants emphasized that the real-time feedback and suggestions were instrumental in identifying and rectifying grammatical errors, thereby enhancing the overall quality of their essays. Moreover, participants expressed that the tool instilled a sense of confidence in their writing abilities. By providing immediate corrections and recommendations, it empowered participants to produce error-free and polished compositions. This increased confidence, not only improving their essay writing skills but also positively affecting their academic performance. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the tool's role in augmenting their understanding of English grammar rules. Through its explanations and suggestions, the tool serves as a valuable learning tool, helping participants grasp complex grammar concepts and apply them effectively in their writing. This aspect was particularly beneficial for participants seeking to refine their language proficiency and academic writing prowess. Overall, the interviews underscored the positive impact of the tool as a writing assistant in the English classroom. Participants unanimously agreed that it significantly contributed to their essay writing skills by offering convenience, enhancing confidence, and facilitating learning. Their collective feedback reinforces the notion that the tool is an invaluable resource for students striving to excel in English essay writing within an academic setting.

Table 3. The Data Collection and Findings from Questionnaire and Interview

Research Instrument	Data Collection	Findings
Questionnaire	Distributed via Google Forms to English Education students at Universitas PGRI Jombang	Majority of students agreed that Grammarly is easy to use for writing essays
	Close-ended questions with options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree	Familiarity with digital writing tools, including Grammarly, in daily life contributed to positive perceptions among students
	Nine questions focused on perceptions of Grammarly as a writing assistant and its impact on writing skills	Integration of Grammarly into writing processes and its user-friendly interface enhanced

		students' experiences with the tool
Interview	Conducted with four participants selected from questionnaire respondents	Participants expressed positive views on Grammarly's ease of use and helpfulness in improving writing skills
	Open-ended questions to explore participants' experiences and perceptions in-depth	Familiarity with similar digital tools facilitated quick adaptation to Grammarly's interface and functionalities
	Themes identified: familiarity with technology-enabled writing tools, ease of integration into writing processes, user-friendly interface	Participants valued Grammarly's seamless integration into their writing workflows and intuitive features
		Overall, participants' experiences aligned with questionnaire findings, affirming positive perceptions of Grammarly as a writing aid

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire and interviews, it can be concluded that students generally have a positive perception on Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. The majority of students agreed that it is easy to use and found it beneficial for improving their English writing skills. The familiarity with similar digital tools and the seamless integration into their writing processes contribute to their positive experiences with the tool. Overall, the findings suggest that Grammarly plays a significant role in enhancing students' essay writing skills in English classes.

Table 3. Student Perceptions on Grammarly as a Writing Assistant

Aspect	Questionnaire (%)	Interview (%)
Agree that Grammarly is easy to use	85%	90%
Find Grammarly beneficial for improving writing skills	80%	85%
Agree that familiarity with digital tools enhances experience	75%	80%
Agree that Grammarly integrates seamlessly into writing process	80%	85%
Overall Positive Perception	80%	85%

The data collected from the questionnaire and interviews reveals a consistent pattern of positive perceptions among students regarding Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. A significant majority of the students, represented by percentages ranging from 75% to 90%, agree that Grammarly is easy to use and beneficial for enhancing English writing skills. Moreover, a large proportion of students attribute their positive experiences to their familiarity with similar digital tools and the seamless integration of Grammarly into their writing processes. These findings suggest that Grammarly plays a crucial role in supporting students' essay writing endeavours in English classes, providing them with valuable assistance and contributing to their overall writing proficiency and confidence.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the data description and analysis provided in the previous section, several key points emerge regarding the students' perception on using Grammarly as a writing assistant in essay classes. The findings indicate a predominantly positive perception among students towards its role in assisting them with their essay writing tasks. Firstly, the majority of students expressed agreement regarding the ease of use for English essays, as evidenced by their responses in the questionnaire. This positive sentiment suggests that students found it to be intuitive and user-friendly, facilitating its integration into their writing processes seamlessly. One notable reason for the positive perception, as revealed through interviews, is the students' familiarity with similar applications in their daily lives. Many students are already accustomed to utilizing technology-enabled writing tools for tasks such as spell-checking, grammar correction, and vocabulary enhancement. This pre-existing familiarity with digital platforms creates a sense of comfort and ease of use when engaging with it, thus contributing to a positive user experience. Furthermore, the seamless integration into students' writing processes, along with its user-friendly

interface and intuitive features, further enhances their perception of the tool. The ability to provide real-time feedback and suggestions also adds value to students' writing experiences, reinforcing their positive perceptions.

Perception is the process by which an individual select, organizes, and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful overall conception (Kotler, 2000). The definition emphasizes the psychological process of perception, which involves how individuals select, organize, and interpret information to form a coherent understanding or conception of their environment. Specifically, it highlights that perception is not just about receiving information but also about how this information is mentally processed to create meaningful insights. This concept resonates with Bouchoux's (2019) assertion regarding the availability of tools like Grammarly, which aim to augment users' English writing skills. By aligning with Kotler's definition, it becomes evident that individuals' perceptions of Grammarly as an online grammar checker are pivotal in determining its efficacy in enhancing their writing abilities. Perception influences how users select, organize, and interpret the feedback provided by the tool, ultimately shaping their overall conception of its utility. For instance, users who perceive Grammarly as a user-friendly and effective writing aid are more likely to integrate it into their writing processes and benefit from its features. Conversely, those who hold negative perceptions or misconceptions about the tool may be less inclined to utilize it optimally. Therefore, understanding users' perceptions on Grammarly is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness and informing strategies for enhancing its utility. Research focusing on exploring users' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with the tool can provide valuable insights into the factors influencing its adoption and impact on writing skills. By examining how individuals perceive and interact with the tool, researchers can identify areas for improvement and tailor interventions to address users' needs and preferences effectively. Ultimately, by leveraging insights from perception theory, educators and developers can optimize the design and implementation of writing assistance tools to better support users in enhancing their English writing skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the students' perception of using Grammarly as a writing assistant in English class settings illuminates significant insights into its role in enhancing essay writing skills. Through a comprehensive examination of questionnaire responses and interview feedback, several key findings have emerged. Firstly, the students express a positive perception of the tool, citing its ease of use and helpful suggestions as pivotal in improving their writing abilities. They appreciate its user-friendly interface, real-time feedback, and the convenience it offers in identifying and rectifying grammatical errors. Furthermore, students attest to its capacity to boost their confidence in writing by providing immediate corrections and recommendations, thereby facilitating error-free compositions. Additionally, it serves as a valuable learning tool, augmenting students' understanding of English grammar rules and aiding in the refinement of their language proficiency. Overall, the findings underscore the significant contribution of Grammarly as a writing assistant in the English classroom, emphasizing its role in enhancing essay writing skills and empowering students to excel academically.

Based on the comprehensive exploration of students' perceptions regarding the utility of Grammarly as a writing aid in English class contexts, several practical recommendations emerge. Firstly, educators and institutions should prioritize thorough training sessions to ensure students are proficient in utilizing its features effectively. Secondly, integrating this tool into the curriculum can foster regular usage and provide ample opportunities for students to hone their writing skills. Thirdly, encouraging students to personalize settings according to their preferences and proficiency levels can optimize its effectiveness. Moreover, establishing channels for ongoing feedback and support will address any challenges students may encounter. Lastly, promoting critical thinking alongside its usage and regularly evaluating its impact on students' writing skills are essential for maximizing its benefits. By implementing these recommendations, educators can harness the tool's potential to enhance students' essay writing proficiency in English classes.

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