Educalingua
International Conference
FPBS UPGRIS

The Student's Perceptions on Using Grammarly Tools in Writing Skill on First Semester English Students at STAIN Madina

Salsabila
Department of English Language Education, State College of Islamic Studies Mandailing Natal, Indonesia, bila34522@gmail.com

Rica Umrina Lubis
Department of English Language Education, State College of Islamic Studies Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore first-semester students' perceptions of using Grammarly as a supporting tool in English writing at STAIN Mandailing Natal (STAIN Madina). A qualitative descriptive design was employed, involving 10 first-semester students from the English Education Department who had used Grammarly for at least one month. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation of students' writing drafts before and after Grammarly-assisted revision, then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model. The findings reveal that students generally held highly positive perceptions of Grammarly, particularly regarding its ease of use, accessibility, and usefulness in improving grammatical accuracy, understanding errors, and accelerating the revision process. Grammarly was also found to increase students' self-confidence and reduce writing anxiety, functioning as a form of instant, non-judgmental feedback. However, several constraints emerged, including dependence on internet connectivity, limited features in the free version, occasional inaccuracies in suggestions, and the risk of over-reliance on the application. Documentation analysis further showed that Grammarly effectively addressed lower-order writing concerns (grammar, punctuation, word choice, coherence) but had minimal impact on higher-order concerns such as idea development, argumentation, and organization. These results support the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), confirming that perceived usefulness and ease of use drive technology adoption. The study concludes that Grammarly functions best as a complementary tool that supports self-editing and learner autonomy rather than as a substitute for lecturer feedback, and recommends

balanced integration of technology with pedagogical guidance in EFL writing instruction.
Keywords: EFL writing, Grammarly, self-editing, students' perceptions, technology-assisted learning

Introduction

Writing is one of the most essential skills in learning English as a foreign language. Through writing, students are able to express their ideas, share information, and communicate their thoughts in a structured and meaningful way. Compared to speaking, listening, and reading, writing is often considered the most complex skill because it requires not only a good understanding of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to organize ideas coherently. In the context of higher education, writing is not only a form of communication but also a tool for academic success. Students are expected to produce essays, reports, and research papers that meet academic standards. However, for most EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, mastering writing skills is still a major challenge.

Many students at STAIN Madina experience difficulties in writing English sentences correctly and effectively. Common problems include limited vocabulary, confusion in using appropriate grammar, and challenges in organizing their ideas into well-structured paragraphs. These issues often result in students feeling anxious or lacking confidence when writing in English. In addition, teachers sometimes face difficulties in providing immediate and detailed feedback due to limited time and a large number of students. As a result, some grammatical errors, such as incorrect tenses, subject-verb agreement, or word choice, often go unnoticed and uncorrected.

In recent years, technological development has offered many solutions to support language learning, especially in writing. One of the most popular tools used by students and teachers today is Grammarly. Grammarly is an online writing assistant that helps users check spelling, grammar, punctuation, and even the clarity of their writing. The tool can instantly detect errors and offer suggestions for improvement, making it very useful for students who want to enhance their writing accuracy and fluency. It also provides explanations for each correction, which can help students understand their mistakes and learn from them. In other words, Grammarly is not only a correction tool but also a learning aid.

The use of Grammarly in academic settings has become increasingly common because it allows students to receive immediate feedback without waiting for the teacher's correction. This can encourage learner autonomy, where students take more responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, Grammarly's user-friendly interface and accessibility make it easy for students to use on various devices, such as laptops and smartphones. With these features, students are motivated to write more frequently and revise their work more independently. However, despite its advantages, there are still questions about how students actually perceive this tool. Some may find it helpful, while others might feel too dependent on it or question the accuracy of its suggestions.

Understanding students' perceptions of using Grammarly is important because perceptions influence attitudes and behavior in learning. If students have a positive perception, they are more likely to use the tool effectively and continuously improve their writing. On the other hand, if they have a negative perception, they may rely on it less or

use it incorrectly. Therefore, studying students' perceptions can provide valuable insights for teachers and institutions to design better writing instruction that integrates technology meaningfully.

At STAIN Madina, the integration of technology in English language learning is continuously being developed. The use of online tools like Grammarly aligns with the institution's goal of promoting digital literacy and supporting students' independent learning. However, not all students are familiar with or confident in using such tools. Some still prefer traditional feedback from lecturers, while others enthusiastically embrace digital assistance. This situation raises interesting questions about how students perceive Grammarly in their writing process — whether they see it as a helpful tool for learning or merely as an error-correcting application.

Based on these considerations, this research aims to explore students' perceptions of using Grammarly in English writing, especially among first-semester students at STAIN Madina. Understanding their perceptions will help educators evaluate the effectiveness of Grammarly as a writing aid and determine how it can be integrated effectively into English writing instruction. Moreover, it will contribute to the broader discussion on how technology can enhance students' writing competence in EFL contexts.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions of using Grammarly as a tool for improving their writing skills at STAIN Madina. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand participants' experiences, opinions, and interpretations of a particular phenomenon in its natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted at the English Education Department of STAIN Madina, North Sumatra, Indonesia, during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year (August–October 2025). The participants consisted of ten first-semester students who had actively used Grammarly in completing writing assignments. They were selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: being first-semester students, having used Grammarly for at least one month, and being willing to participate voluntarily in the study. The researcher acted as the primary research instrument and was supported by a semi-structured interview guide, an observation sheet, and documentation, including students' writing drafts, Grammarly feedback reports, screenshots of revisions, and other relevant learning materials to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. The interviews, which lasted approximately 20–30 minutes for each participant, were conducted in either English or Indonesian according to the participants' preferences to obtain rich and comprehensive information about their experiences, opinions, and perceptions of Grammarly. Classroom observations were carried out to examine students' interactions with Grammarly, including how they responded to grammar corrections, vocabulary suggestions, and writing feedback during learning activities. In addition, documentation such as Grammarly reports, students' writing assignments, revision drafts, and screenshots of the correction process was collected to complement the interview and observation data. The use of these three data collection techniques enabled methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the analysis, relevant data from interviews, observations, and documentation were selected, organized, categorized into emerging themes, and presented in descriptive narratives supported by participants' quotations. The conclusions were continuously verified by comparing them with the original data to ensure consistency, credibility, and accuracy. The research procedure consisted of four stages: preparation, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Ethical principles were maintained throughout the study by obtaining permission from the English Education Department of STAIN Madina, informing participants about the research objectives and procedures, obtaining their voluntary consent, protecting their identities through anonymity, ensuring confidentiality, and using all collected data solely for academic purposes.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that first-semester students in the English Education Study Program at STAIN Madina generally have positive perceptions of Grammarly as a writing support tool. The research employed a descriptive approach that integrated quantitative and qualitative data collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. The questionnaire measured students' perceptions regarding ease of use, perceived usefulness, and constraints in using Grammarly, while interviews provided deeper insights into students' experiences and emotional responses. Documentation analysis was conducted by comparing students' writing drafts before and after Grammarly-assisted revisions. The integration of these three data sources through triangulation enhanced the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research findings.

One of the most prominent findings concerns students' perceptions of Grammarly's ease of use. Most participants agreed that Grammarly is easy to access, integrates well with web browsers and word processors, and provides an intuitive interface with clear correction suggestions. These features enabled students, including those with limited experience using digital learning technologies, to operate the application without significant difficulties. Students reported that Grammarly's real-time feedback helped them identify grammatical mistakes immediately, reduced their anxiety while writing in English, and encouraged them to revise their work more frequently. The simplicity and accessibility of the application also increased students' willingness to use Grammarly consistently throughout the writing process. These findings support the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989), which suggests that perceived ease of use significantly influences users' acceptance and continued use of educational technology.

The findings also demonstrate that students perceived Grammarly as a useful tool for improving their academic writing. Participants reported that Grammarly contributed to improving grammatical accuracy, helping them understand grammatical errors, increasing their confidence, and accelerating the revision process. Rather than merely correcting mistakes, Grammarly provided explanations that enabled students to understand the reasons behind each suggested correction, thereby supporting the learning process. Furthermore, students stated that the application allowed them to

complete revisions more efficiently, submit assignments with greater confidence, and devote more attention to developing the content of their writing instead of focusing solely on mechanical errors. These results indicate that Grammarly functions not only as an automated proofreading tool but also as a learning resource that facilitates the development of students' writing competence.

Despite these positive perceptions, several limitations of Grammarly were identified by the participants. The most frequently mentioned constraint was the limited functionality of the free version, which restricts access to advanced feedback on clarity, tone, and delivery. Students also reported that Grammarly requires a stable internet connection, which occasionally interrupted their revision process. In addition, some participants acknowledged that the application does not always provide accurate correction suggestions and expressed concern about becoming overly dependent on automated feedback. These findings indicate that although Grammarly effectively supports lower-order writing concerns, it cannot replace students' critical thinking or lecturers' guidance in addressing more complex aspects of academic writing.

The interview findings further reinforced the quantitative results by revealing four dominant themes regarding students' experiences. First, Grammarly was perceived as a source of instant feedback that enabled students to identify and correct errors without waiting for lecturers' comments. Second, students reported increased confidence when submitting assignments after reviewing their work through Grammarly. Third, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the limitations of the free version, particularly the inability to access advanced writing suggestions without a premium subscription. Finally, documentation analysis of students' writing drafts confirmed noticeable improvements in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, and sentence coherence after using Grammarly. However, Grammarly showed minimal contribution to higher-order writing aspects, such as idea development, organization, and argumentative quality, indicating that the application should be viewed as a complementary instructional tool rather than a substitute for lecturer feedback.

Overall, the findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that Grammarly enhances students' confidence, learner autonomy, and writing efficiency through its ease of use and immediate corrective feedback. The results also support the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which emphasizes perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key determinants of technology adoption. Nevertheless, the identified limitations—particularly the restricted features of the free version and Grammarly's inability to provide comprehensive feedback on higher-order writing concerns—confirm that the application functions primarily as an editing assistant rather than a replacement for the cognitive processes involved in academic writing or the pedagogical guidance provided by lecturers.

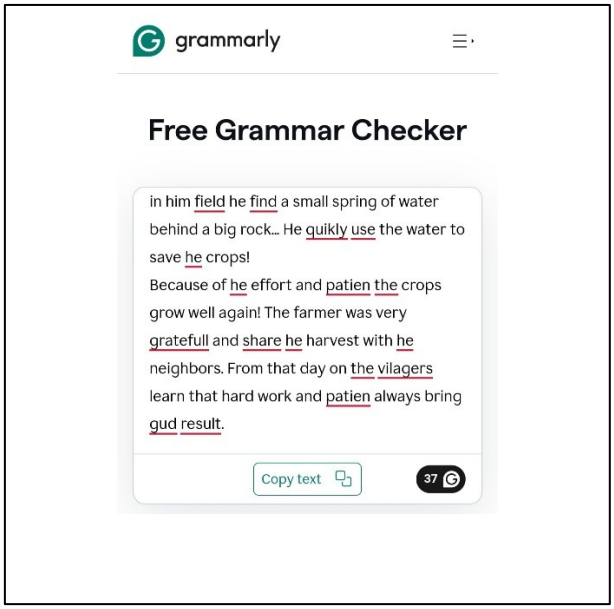


Figure 1. Grammarly app interface

Conclusion

This study explored first-semester students' perceptions of using Grammarly as a supporting tool for English writing at STAIN Madina. The findings revealed that students generally held positive perceptions of Grammarly in terms of its ease of use, accessibility, and usefulness. The application was considered user-friendly and appropriate for students adapting to academic writing and digital learning environments. Grammarly was found to be effective in improving lower-order writing skills, including grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and word choice, while also increasing students' confidence and reducing anxiety through immediate feedback that encouraged independent revision and learner autonomy. However, the study also identified several limitations, including restricted features in the free version, dependence on stable internet access, occasional inaccuracies in automated feedback, and limited effectiveness in addressing higher-order writing concerns such as idea development, organization, coherence, and argumentation. These findings suggest that Grammarly functions most effectively as a supplementary learning tool that supports self-editing while maintaining the essential role of lecturer feedback in developing academic writing skills.

The findings also provide important implications for English language teaching in higher education. Lecturers are encouraged to integrate Grammarly into the writing process, particularly during the editing stage, while guiding students to evaluate automated feedback critically in order to strengthen metalinguistic awareness, learner autonomy, and grammatical understanding. By reducing time spent correcting mechanical errors, lecturers can devote greater attention to higher-order writing skills, including critical thinking, coherence, organization, and argument development. Students are encouraged to use Grammarly as a learning companion rather than a final authority, reflecting on recurring errors to improve their long-term writing competence, whereas lecturers should continue to facilitate critical discussion of Grammarly's suggestions. At the institutional level, STAIN Madina may strengthen technology-

enhanced learning by providing Grammarly Premium access and professional development for lecturers. Since this study focused on students' perceptions rather than measurable writing achievement, future research is recommended to investigate Grammarly's long-term effects on writing proficiency through longitudinal or experimental studies and to compare automated feedback with teacher feedback across different contexts. Overall, Grammarly contributes positively to students' grammatical accuracy, confidence, and learner autonomy; nevertheless, effective writing instruction still requires a balanced integration of educational technology, lecturer guidance, and students' reflective learning so that Grammarly complements rather than replaces traditional writing pedagogy.

References

Apriani, E., Anshori, S., & Edy, S. (2019). Eksistensi English Zone Sebagai Media Penerapan Kemampuan Berbahasa Inggris Mahasiswa Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris IAIN CURUP. Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan, 17(2), 317–332.

Bailey, S. (2011). Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students(3rd ed.). Routledge.

Bouchoux, D. E. (2019). Legal Research and Writing for Paralegals.Wolters Kluwer Law & Business.

Byrne, D. (1988). Teaching Writing Skills. Longman Group Limited.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Educational Research: Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (3rd ed.). Pearson.

Dewi, U. (2023). Grammarly as Automated Writing Evaluation: Its Effectiveness from EFL Students' Perceptions. Lingua Cultura, 16(2), 155–161.

Ghufron, M. A., & Rosyida, F. (2018). The Role of Grammarly in Assessing EFL WritingLing.ua Cultura, 12(4), 395–402.

Jaelani, A., & Rahmah, S. D. (2019). Students' Perceptions Toward The Use of Mobile Learning in Learning English. English Journal, 13(1), 9–16.

Kotler, P. (2000). Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Control.Prentice Hall.

Pratama, Y. D. (2020). The Investigation of Using Grammarly as Online Grammar Checker in the Process of Writing.English Ideas: Journal of English Language Education, 1(1), 25–35.

Rahma Hakiki, G. N. (2021). Perception of EFL Students on the Use Grammarly Application in Writing Class.Eduvelop, 4(2), 99–106.

Seyoum, W. M., Yigzaw, A., & Bewuketu, H. K. (2022). Students' Attitudes and Problems on Question-Based Argumentative Essay Writing Instruction. Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 3(2), 58–63.

Smalley, R. L., & Ruetten, M. K. (1986). Refining Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar for ESL Students. Macmillan Publishing.

Syafi'i, A. (2020). Grammarly: An Online EFL Writing Companion. ELTICS: Journal of English Language Teaching and English Linguistics, 5(2), 95–106.

Ummah, L. K., & Bisriyah, M. (2022). EFL Students' Perception of Grammarly's Feedback and How They Deal with Inaccuracy.Journal of English Educators Society, 7(2), 120–133.

Aisyah, N., & Irawati, T. (2024). Grammarly in Essay Writing through the Lens of Students' Perception.Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Studi Amerika, 30(1), 11–18.

Ayan, A. D., & Erdemir, N. (2023).EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Automated Written Corrective Feedback and Grammarly.AKEF Journal.

Bailey, D. R., et al. (2025).Writing Support with Grammarly: Examining Confidence and User Perceptions.TOJET.

Chen, Q. (2025).Students' Perceptions of AI-Powered Feedback in English Writing. IJCE.

Dizon, G., & Gold, J. (2023). Exploring the Effects of Grammarly on EFL Students' Foreign Language Anxiety and Learner Autonomy. .JALT CALL Journal.

Resiana, A. T., et al. (2024). The Effectiveness of Grammarly Application on Students' Argumentative Writing Progress. JEEF.

Hyland, K. (2003). Second Language Writing. Cambridge University Press.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining Self-Regulation: A Social Cognitive Perspective. Academic Press.

Moleong, L. J. (2018). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif.Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications.

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology. MIS Quarterly, 13(3), 319–340.

Dizon, G., & Gold, J. (2023). Exploring the Effects of Grammarly on EFL Students' Foreign Language Anxiety and Learner Autonomy. JALT CALL Journal.S

Hyland, K. (2003). Second Language Writing. Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues. Cambridge University Press.

Moleong, L. J. (2018). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. Remaja Rosdakarya.

Stevenson, M., & Phakiti, A. (2019). Automated Writing Evaluation: Student Perceptions and the Impact on Revision. Language Learning & Technology, 23(2), 41–67.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining Self-Regulation: A Social Cognitive Perspective. Academic Press.S