

NON MAJORED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING GRAMMARLY APPLICATION TO ASSIST THEIR ENGLISH WRITING PRACTICE

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Abstract: *English writing proficiency is crucial for university students, for both academic pursuits and future professional communication. During the acquisition of English writing skills at university, a majority of students still make serious mistakes regarding grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Giving feedbacks on students' written work is regarded as important, for it not only helps improve students' writing skills, but motivates their frequent practice as well. Nevertheless, that teachers face recurring issues such as unequal distribution of the courses whose contents focus more on other English skills; and huge class sizes somehow diminishes the quality of their feedback. As a result, students are encouraged to utilize feedback from Grammarly, an artificial intelligence technology to aid them in their writing practice. This paper investigated how students perceive feedback from Grammarly as a tool to correct mistakes in their written work and their perceptions toward using Grammarly in the learning process. The objective was to determine the features of Grammarly and students' perception of using technology in learning to write. This study utilized a close-ended questionnaire with five indicators of Likert scale, with participants are 60 English non majored second - year students at Dong Nai Technology University. The findings suggested that the majority of students hold a positive opinion on the use of Grammarly to aid them in learning English writing.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; English writing; feedback; Grammarly.*

I. Introduction

The fact that students master English writing is essential as it is extensively employed in academic and professional settings. In the absence of proficient

writing skills, a student will encounter difficulties in effectively communicating with professors, colleagues, or any other individuals. Nevertheless, the acquisition of writing proficiency poses significant

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challenges for learners when it comes to grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Cheng (2007) observed that students experienced a lack of confidence and were reluctant to make edits to their work following feedback from teachers. Regarding the current state of teaching English at the workplace, the author observed that his students had the same challenges mentioned above when it came to English writing lessons. Consequently, the students experience a lack of motivation and tend to feel scared when it comes to English writing sessions. In addition, students seldom have teachers meticulously correct every aspect of their written work.

In this study, the researcher aims to discuss students' use of Grammarly in their writing practice. The objective was to assess the influence of Grammarly on students' writing proficiency and their attitudes towards incorporating technology in writing practice. It helps point out the students' tendencies in learning to write and find out whether the tool can truly influence their writing skills. There are two questions raised: How does Grammarly support students in their writing practice? What are students' perceptions toward the use of Grammarly?

This article examines the possible advantages and restrictions of Grammarly, which is accessible in its free editions. It is crucial to note that Grammarly solely provides suggestions, and users have the discretion to determine whether to accept them. This writing tool is not designed to assist with content or organization.

II. Literature review:

2.1. Difficulties in learning English writing

Various initiatives have been undertaken in Vietnamese university settings to enhance students' enthusiasm and proficiency in English writing. Nevertheless, these activities remain insufficient in terms of their efficacy in motivating learners to acquire this particular skill (Nguyen, 2011). At this point, the task of writing gets challenging. Language learners, especially low-level ones commit errors in various facets of writing, including spelling, punctuation, and grammar. This can be partially attributed to the substandard quality of teachers' feedback and students' lack of motivation.

2.2. Feedback on students' written works

Writing feedback encompasses three main components: content, style, and grammar (Hartono, 2011). The study focused on discussing grammar feedback. According to Qosayere (2015), providing feedback and correcting grammar had a beneficial effect on students' writing skills as it encouraged them to actively engage in learning and focus on improving their grammar.

According to Lee (2020), feedback plays a crucial role in the process of learning and teaching English writing. When it comes to writing practice, students tend to seek teachers' corrective feedback which ensures explanations and recommendations for enhancing their writing skills. Nevertheless, the process

of giving feedback requires a significant amount of time and exertion (Zhang, 2017). Various contextual factors, such as limited time, overwhelming workload, and huge class sizes, hinder teachers from providing high-quality feedback (Ghufron, 2019). Typically, teachers provide students with indirect feedback by using symbols to indicate errors (Hartono, 2011). Therefore, in order to alleviate workload of teachers in providing feedback and improve the effectiveness of input, automated feedback may be employed.

2.3. Grammarly

Grammarly is an online proofreading service that is widely regarded as one of the most pioneering firms in the field of artificial intelligence. In 2015, a free version of Grammarly was launched with the aim of offering writing support to all individuals. This application provides a range of checking services including grammar, spelling, punctuation, readability, wordiness, plagiarism, and offers guidance on writing clarity, conciseness, vocabulary usage, delivery style, and tone. The study conducted by Ghufron and Rosyida (2018) showed that this approach was more effective in minimizing errors related to grammatical accuracy, spelling, and punctuation. Because of this, students can not only learn from their mistakes more fully, but increase confidence and motivation as well (Perdana et al., 2021). Several recent studies have examined the students' perceptions of using Grammarly as a tool in the learning process. Nova did a research

study in 2018 titled "Utilizing Grammarly in Evaluating Academic Writing: A Narrative Research on EFL Students' Experience." The analysis centered on the merits and drawbacks of Grammarly as perceived by several students that utilize this platform. Nova (2018) stated that students discovered Grammarly's success in providing valuable feedback through its suggestions, which are accompanied by explanations. Additionally, the platform offers free and convenient access, as well as fast checking.

III. Research methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine students' perspectives on utilizing Grammarly as a tool to detect errors in their written essays. The number of participants of this study consisted of 60 undergraduate students who were in their second year at Dong Nai Technology University.

The researchers employed a closed-ended questionnaire designed as a Likert scale in their investigation. The statement comprises five answer options: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). Students select a single alternative based on their perspectives.

The questionnaire was partly created and modified from Pratama, Y. D. (2020). The data was collected by the administration of questionnaires to students using Microsoft Form, which consisted of 12 statements. Below are the questionnaires utilized in the research article by Pratama, Y. D. (2020) to assess students' perspectives.

No.	Statements
Students' Perceptions about Grammarly's feedback	
1	Grammarly can identify and rectify spelling errors in your writing.
2	Grammarly can identify and rectify punctuation errors in your writing.
3	Grammarly can identify and rectify grammatical errors in your writing.
4	Grammarly can assist in refining your linguistic writing style.
5	Grammarly can save your sentences from uncertainty.
6	Grammarly offers comprehensive explanations to enhance your writing skills
Students' Opinions About the Use of Grammarly	
7	Grammarly is flexible to use.
8	Grammarly enhances your confidence in submitting your paper.
9	Grammarly enhances your motivation to write
10	Grammarly's free version lacks certainty
11	Grammarly is frustrating as it detects numerous grammatical errors.
12	Grammarly is challenging as it has no Vietnamese explanation.

Following the development of the questionnaires, two fundamental procedures were proceeded. Initially, each question was thoroughly examined to assess its clarity and suitability. Furthermore, the questionnaire underwent direct testing with a sample of 60 students who precisely match the survey subjects of this study.

The data collected for the questionnaire was inputted into Excel for analysis which involved calculating the percentage for each item and presenting the results in the form of graphs and tables. The transcriptions were thereafter

finalized by considering the prevailing conclusions derived from the data. Data collecting was carried out formally in November 2023, utilizing both in-person and online methods.

IV. Results and Discussion

After obtaining data through questionnaire, the researcher divided the results into two interrelated and collaborating categories; students' perceptions about Grammarly's feedback, and Students' opinions about the use of Grammarly. The data of the result were generated both into graphs and tables with the percentage of students' responses.

4.1. Students' Perceptions about Grammarly's feedback

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Grammarly can identify and rectify spelling errors in your writing.	90%	5%	5%	0%	0%
2	Grammarly can identify and rectify punctuation errors in your writing.	75%	12%	5%	8%	0%
3	Grammarly can identify and rectify grammatical errors in your writing.	35%	35%	0%	30%	0%
4	Grammarly can assist in refining your linguistic writing style.	0%	0%	10%	80%	10%
5	Grammarly can save your sentences from uncertainty.	0%	0%	5%	55%	40%

Table 1: Students' perceptions toward main features of Grammarly

Spelling errors are a prevalent form of mistakes in written language because they can elicit significant discomfort in readers. However, Grammarly can promptly identify spelling errors and assess the contextual meaning of the word. It then provides a list of suggested replacements, with the most suitable option displayed at the top. The findings show that a majority of the students agreed and strongly agreed with Grammarly's spelling checking feature (57 students). In other words, most students considered Grammarly as a valuable tool for spelling error identification and correction, so that they can use Grammarly to minimize their spelling mistakes.

Grammarly employs an intelligent algorithm to assist in identifying grammatical faults and effectively addressing them during the process of composing English texts. Grammarly automatically detects problems in vocabulary, missing words, and poor sentence structure when users input English sentences or text. Nevertheless, it also occasionally provides inaccurate suggestions. Because of this, 30% of the students (18 students) disagreed with the idea that Grammarly can identify and rectify grammatical errors in their writing. However, there were still 70% of them decided to believe in the feedback given by Grammarly.

The next focus was on punctuation. In fact, students frequently neglect to use commas in crucial locations and include unnecessary commas. Grammarly detects faults in sentences that are structured

wrongly. This guarantees that those who are new to English or have a lower proficiency level can produce written English that closely resembles that of a native speaker. As a result, there were 52 students, with a percentage of 87% strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that Grammarly can identify and rectify punctuation errors in their writing. Nevertheless, 5 students expressed their disagreement with the clarification regarding certain punctuation suggestions offered by this function. Occasionally, this may occur, particularly when the sentences are too lengthy.

On the clarity or styles, most students, with a percentage of more than 90%, hoped to use these features to make more concise and precise sentences. However, these features are only available in Grammarly premium version.

Figure 1 depicts the computation of the Strongly Agree and Agree categories, indicating that 75% of participants shared the belief that Grammarly is a beneficial tool to provide in-depth explanations. The outcome closely resembled the findings of the study conducted by Calvari and Dianati (2016).

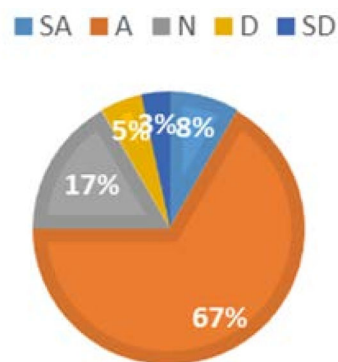


Figure 1: Grammarly offers comprehensive explanations

4.2. Students' Opinions about the Use of Grammarly

4.2.1. Advantages of using Grammarly

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
7	Grammarly is flexible to use.	50%	47%	3%	0%	0%
8	Grammarly enhances your confidence in submitting your paper.	15%	45%	25%	10%	5%
9	Grammarly enhances your motivation to write.	35%	45%	10%	10%	0%

Table 2: Advantages of using Grammarly

The Grammarly software offers versatile compatibility across several platforms, including web browsers, Windows operating systems, and mobile devices. In addition, Grammarly is compatible with add-ons for Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and Microsoft Edge browsers. Upon successful installation, the spell checking and mistake correction feature will automatically activate and appear on the keyboard when typing English text in applications. When users enter English text, Grammarly promptly identifies spelling and grammar issues by displaying red dots with associated numbers indicating the number of errors and suggested alternative words. To view and repair these errors, users simply click on the dots and follow the provided suggestions. Needless to say, most of the students (58 students) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that Grammarly is flexible to use.

Students exhibit a wide range of responses on their level of confidence while utilizing Grammarly feedback. Out of the total of 60 students, 60% expressed

strong agreement or agreement with the notion that Grammarly's comments enhances their writing confidence. Despite 25% of students selecting a neutral option, they maintained their belief in the efficacy of the Grammarly program to enhance their confidence when delivering papers to their instructors. Nevertheless, 15% of students held a contrary opinion to this assertion.

According to the ninth statement, the majority of students expressed a positive response regarding the potential of Grammarly feedback to improve their motivation to write in English. This is supported by 80% strongly agreeing or agreeing, while 10% remained neutral on this matter. Moreover, this category confirms the findings of Ghufon and Rosyida (2018) regarding the positive influence of Grammarly on enhancing students' grammar in academic writing. It was disclosed that the students were encouraged to learn from their mistakes, as indicated by Grammarly, in order to improve their grammar skills in academic writing.

4.2.2. Disadvantages of using Grammarly

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	Grammarly's free version lacks certainty	22.5%	47.5%	20%	10%	0%
11	Grammarly is frustrating as it detects numerous grammatical errors.	30%	35%	25%	5%	5%
12	Grammarly is challenging as it has no Vietnamese explanation.	0%	12%	10%	68%	10%

In relation to the utilization of Grammarly in English writing, the data reveals that 22.5% of participants strongly agree and 47.5% agree with the assertion. This indicates that the majority of students (70%) concur that the free version of Grammarly is not effective. Fitria (2021) argues that the free version of the English grammar check service has limitations and lacks service features, while the subscription version provides comprehensive benefits, has diverse functions, and is more advanced. According to data from question 11, 30% of respondents strongly agreed and 35% agreed with the statement, suggesting that a total of 65% of students experience frustration when encountering several grammar faults while utilizing Grammarly. In the twelfth question, a significant majority of respondents (78%) expressed disagreement, suggesting that they did not encounter any challenges while using Grammarly, despite the absence of Vietnamese language support in the application.

V. Conclusion

This study sought to examine the impact of Grammarly use on students' engagement in academic writing. The results of this study suggest that Grammarly has the ability to analyze grammar, spelling, and punctuation and provide feedback which can be effectively utilized in the learning process to minimize grammatical issues in writing and encourage learners to engage in more regular writing activities. However, there is a scarcity of research on this topic in Vietnamese university settings, with only a few studies addressing the subject. Furthermore, several writing courses prohibit students from using Grammarly. To enhance the depth of research, it is advisable to include a wider

range of participants in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the application of Grammarly in writing courses. Overall, the utilization of the Grammarly application during writing exercises was found to be appropriate for the students in this study. Simultaneously, engaging in learning activities in this manner also supports the development of learners' cognitive abilities and motivation.

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QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN VỀ VIỆC SỬ DỤNG ỨNG DỤNG GRAMMARLY ĐỂ HỖ TRỢ VIỆC LUYỆN TẬP VIẾT TIẾNG ANH

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Tóm Tắt: Việc sinh viên có khả năng viết tiếng Anh thành thạo không chỉ là một lợi thế trong học tập, nghiên cứu mà đó còn là một yêu cầu rất quan trọng cho nghề nghiệp trong tương lai. Tuy nhiên, trong quá trình học kỹ năng viết luận, đa số sinh viên vẫn còn mắc nhiều lỗi nghiêm trọng về ngữ pháp, chính tả và dấu câu. Việc đánh giá và đưa ra nhận xét về bài viết rất quan trọng vì nó không chỉ cải thiện kỹ năng viết mà còn tạo động lực viết cho sinh viên. Tuy nhiên, việc giảng viên sửa bài gặp những khó khăn như thời lượng phân bổ dành cho các kỹ năng khác nhiều hơn kỹ năng viết khi học kết hợp, quy mô lớp học quá đông, phần nào làm giảm chất lượng nhận xét bài viết cho sinh viên. Vì vậy, sinh viên được khuyến khích sử dụng trí thông minh nhân tạo Grammarly để hỗ trợ sửa lỗi bài viết tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu này tập trung vào cách sinh viên nhìn nhận ứng dụng Grammarly như một công cụ sửa bài viết, cũng như nhận thức của họ về việc sử dụng ứng dụng trong quá trình luyện tập kỹ năng viết. Mục tiêu là để xác định tính năng của Grammarly và nhận thức của sinh viên về việc sử dụng công nghệ trong quá trình học viết tiếng Anh học thuật. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng bảng câu hỏi với 5 chỉ số theo thang đo Likert, với đối tượng tham gia là 60 sinh viên không chuyên năm 2 trường đại học Công Nghệ Đồng Nai. Kết quả cho thấy phần đa sinh viên có suy nghĩ tích cực về việc sử dụng ứng dụng Grammarly để hỗ trợ quá trình học viết tiếng Anh học thuật.

Từ Khóa: Grammarly; nhận xét; trí thông minh nhân tạo; viết tiếng Anh.

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