

INVESTIGATING EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF GRAMMARLY PREMIUM AS AN AUTOMATIC WRITING EVALUATION IN THE ASPECTS OF WRITING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narulita Kusuma Wardani^{1*}

Henny Rahmawati¹

Dzurriyyatun Ni'mah¹

¹English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Islam Malang, Malang 65144, INDONESIA

Abstract: This study aimed to find out students' perceptions of the use of Grammarly Premium as an automatic writing evaluation in the aspects of writing. The research design used narrative inquiry with purposive sampling techniques and the data were analyzed qualitatively. The participants are EFL students at the University of Islam Malang in the academic year 2018. The researcher took two participants who have experience with the use of Grammarly Premium and the researcher used an interview with semi-structured interview modes as the instrument. The findings showed that the two participants have positive perceptions such as giving useful feedback in order to check the tone of their content, giving paraphrase suggestions, also checking language, vocabulary, punctuation, and capitalization. Meanwhile, the negative perceptions cover errors and over-checking in terms of aspects of writing vocabulary and language.

Key Words: Grammarly Premium, Aspects of Writing, Perception, Narrative Inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The process of writing uses a combination of several aspects namely, communicating ideas, thoughts, views, and emotions to others. According to Setyowati (2016) writing is about how the aspects of writing are organized very well so that it is not only just communicating ideas because good writing arranges

^{1*}Corresponding author, email: narulita458@gmail.com

Citation in APA style: Wardani, Narulita Kusuma. 2022. *Investigating EFL Students' Perception of Grammarly Premium as an Automatic Writing Evaluation in the Aspects of Writing: A Narrative Inquiry*. Skripsi, English Education Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education University of Islam Malang.

Received February 4, 2023; Revised February 4, 2023; Accepted February 4, 2023

from a good writing aspect. Someone needs to find content that fits the theme of writing so that they can express their thoughts and ideas. After that, people need to organize their writing so that it becomes connected writing. In addition, the choice of sentence structure and punctuation is something that needs to be considered is that it becomes good writing. According to Karyuatry (2018) to ensure the overall coherence and cohesiveness of a piece of writing, component elements such as effective word choice, correct grammatical usage, and concise delivery must flow together seamlessly.

Meanwhile, several studies showed that students still have obstacles in writing. According to Karyuatry (2018), students face problems with prepositions, unfamiliar words, passive voice, adverbs, and phrases. Another study conducted by Mubarak (2017) shows some difficulties such as parallel structures, the use of irregular, tenses, and organization in writing also faced by the students. Moreover, Ummah (2022) states that errors in writing content, vocabulary, and other mechanical issues become the reason faced by Indonesian EFL students struggle to write a good thesis following they should write in their non-native language.

In line with technological developments, Karyuatry (2018) proposed that students may prepare for this scenario by using technology to check their own writing. Nowadays, there is several Automatic Writing Evaluation (AWE) that can help students for doing their self-reviewing. One of the kinds of those programs that implemented Automatic Writing Evaluation (AWE) is Grammarly. According to Nova (2018) Grammarly is an automatic grammar checker that can be used by learners with many helpful features. In the use of the Grammarly application, students can choose the best version of Grammarly that prefer for them, whether Free Version or Premium (paid version).

There are several studies related with Grammarly as online grammar checker in writing. The first research is written by Karyuatry (2018), the result showed that Grammarly has strengths in reducing errors and improving students' writing quality. The second research conducted by Ghufroon & Rosyida (2018) the result of this study is students who work with Grammarly significantly in reducing students' errors in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling rather to

students who are given feedback from the teacher. The third research is written by Nova (2018) that shows the strengths and weaknesses of Grammarly. The useful feedback with clear explanation, save the time, and the speed evaluation becomes the strengths of Grammarly. Meanwhile, the unstable connections and inaccurate feedbacks from Grammarly becomes the weaknesses. The fourth research conducted by Lailika (2019) that showed Grammarly can provides students' feedback for check their grammar so they can save the time. Besides that, they have negative perception of Grammarly following they need a good internet connection and the feedback from Grammarly is not always accurate. The fifth research written by Ummah (2022) show the positive and negative perception of Grammarly also this research shows the inaccurate feedback and how the students deal with it by doing double-checking.

Therefore, following a good writing comes from a good aspect of writing, according to Byrne (1993) there are 5 aspects of writing consisting of, content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics. So, the researcher in this study was interested in exploring students' perception of Grammarly Premium features in providing feedback on their writing based on writing aspects.

METHOD

Research Design

This research was carried out using narrative inquiry. According to Creswell (2014), narrative research design is qualitative procedures that by using this study the researcher can describe people's lives, gather and share tales about these people's lives, and compose narratives about their experiences. Using narrative research, the researcher investigated students' perception of Grammarly Premium in their Academic Writing based on aspects of writing.

Setting and Subject

This research conducted at the University of Islam Malang, specifically in English Education Department. The subjects are English Education Department students in the academic year 2018 who use Grammarly Premium in their academic writing for at least 3 months to 1 year.

Instrument

In this study to collect the stories of the participants, the researcher used interviews as the primary data collection technique with semi-structured interviews types. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of questions that will be discussed during the interview, but there is flexibility in how and when questions will be asked and how participants can respond.

Data Collection

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen to be used to dig deeper data so that it can find more specific answers from respondents. The interview was conducted in English, took a record of the interview, and took a note several times. After recording the interview, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the interview result. In conducting this research, the name of the respondent is not a real name but it is a pseudonym.

The researcher used several steps in conducting narrative inquiry. The first is identifying the phenomenon to explore. Second the researcher chooses the participants based on several criteria. Then, the researcher collecting the stories from participants and after that re-storying the story collaborating with the participant. Then the next steps, the researcher reporting the finding from the participant's experiences and validating the report's accuracy. In this study, the researcher used Memberchecking as the validation method.

Data Analysis

In this research, all forms of data that have been obtained will be converted into a script. The results of the recorded interviews will be converted into a verbatim interview format.

After the data obtained were completely converted into manuscript form, then the data were categorized based on themes, sub-categories of themes, and refined by coding. The final transcriptions were then evaluated after being verified by the students who conducted the interview. Then the researcher created the interpretation from their stories. The final interpretation was provided back to the students to ensure that it was clear. To analyze the data, the researcher used narrative analysis by using participants' answers to each question as primary data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

1. Hera's (R₁) and Nino (R₂) Experiences of Using Grammarly Premium

Hera and Nino are English Foreign Language student who used Grammarly Premium with different in usage time. Hera used Grammarly Premium for about six months, before that she used the free version one. She decided to use Grammarly Premium because the Free one can't satisfying her. She said,

So, before that, I use the Free one but the service is not satisfying me. That's why I try the premium one, and I think the premium one is better than the Free one because there are so many services that I can use and I get from the premium one. (Hera)

Hera shared her experience an the reasons why she finally decided to use Grammarly Premium. That is because the Free Version can't satisfying her and she believes that Premium Version has many services that can be used rather than the Free version.

Meanwhile Nino used Grammarly Premium for about 1 years but before that he is also used the Free one. He decided to use Grammarly Premium because he still found that there are some words that are not revised by the Free Version. He said,

I prefer Grammarly Premium rather than Free Grammarly because after using Grammarly for Free, I still realize that there are some words that are not revised correctly because the Free edition is limited to some recommendations to edit your writing. (Nino)

The beginning reason why Nino chose Grammarly is that he believes that as a non-native speaker, sometimes when he writes in English there will be some mistakes and he found that when using Grammarly's Free version some words are still not revised correctly.

2. Hera's (R₁) and Nino's (R₂) Experiences: Perceptions of Grammarly Premium in the Aspects of Writing

Content

Responding to a question related to how Grammarly Premium helps in terms of Content, Hera shared her experience. She said,

In terms of content, I think not. They didn't help with that. (Hera)

Regarding the follow-up question about one of Grammarly Premium's features which are checking plagiarism, Hera added the other statements. She stated,

Oh, I just know that Grammarly Premium can help us to check the originality of our writing. But, I didn't use that feature because I think it's too risky. (Hera)

Hera shared that she knows one of the features of this application is checking the originality of the content. But, she believes that the use of the feature of checking plagiarism in Grammarly Premium is too risky. She added an explanation about what she means by "risk",

The "risk" I mean is, as we know that Grammarly is based on the websites, they have the application but they also connect with the website, which means they connect with Google, right? So, if we use the plagiarism checker in Grammarly Premium I thought that our data will be backed up automatically by Google and I think it's too risky for me because if my data is backed up by Google, and I check again the plagiarism will rise even though not much. (Hera)

Following what she believed in one of Grammarly Premium's features which is checking plagiarism, she decided to not use this feature in checking their academic writing. In the other side, Nino also shared his experience in terms of Content. He said,

When writing using Grammarly Premium, I think in terms of content I don't really find it helpful because the content depends on what's my topic. But sometimes some parts of content only show in Grammarly Premium it is about whether I sound Formal, thankful, Free, or informal. Something like that, it only shows the content that you write is informal, or maybe it is helpful or informative. Something like that. (Nino)

Nino gives negative perception that Grammarly Premium didn't help in terms of content, but he also added positive perception that in terms of content Grammarly Premium helps him to check the information on his content, so he can get the information whether his content sounds formal, thankful, or informal.

Organization

Providing an answer to a question about how Grammarly Premium helps in terms of Organization, Hera and Nino shared their stories.

Hera (R₁)

I think it's helpful in aspects of the organization because sometimes Grammarly over suggestions like I better write my sentence like this and give me recommendations to paraphrase some of the sentences that may be too confusing or ambiguous for others to read. That's why Grammarly Premium over the suggestions to me.

Adding to the previous statements, Hera stated,

Sometimes I feel my own writing is correct and appropriate. So, if I always agree with suggestions from Grammarly Premium it even looks like normal words. I mean normal words here are Lexical Words. The words are based on the dictionary and are truly standard. So like the sentence model is also just a complex sentence, and the complex sentence is only using one of the conjunctions.

Nino (R₂)

I think Grammarly gives some good recommendations on conjunctions between words, phrases, and clauses. Some recommendations connect my writing between paragraphs and that is really helpful when I don't really have a connection or conjunction in each paragraph.

Following Hera experience, she gives two perceptions. Hera believes that Grammarly helps her in terms of Organization because Grammarly Premium gives her suggestions to paraphrase sentences if the sentences are too ambiguous. But, Hera does not always agree with the suggestions because sometimes the suggestions make her writing back to normal words. Then, Grammarly Premium only helps her to organize her sentence structure, not the content structure.

In the other hand, Nino gives a positive perception of Grammarly Premium because it can help him to give recommendations when he doesn't have a connection or conjunction in each paragraph, so the paragraph in his writing can be organized well. Nino also confirms that in terms of organization, Grammarly Premium only helps with sentence structure. This application didn't help him to arrange the structure of the content.

Vocabulary

Giving responses to a question regarding how Grammarly Premium helps in terms of vocabulary, Hera and Nino expressed their experience.

Hera (R₁)

I think it helps me too. Because in terms of vocabulary sometimes Grammarly over suggestions like I have added an article or I have to add these kinds of words to the sentence. That's kind of helpful. For example, this word needs "the" or "a". Something like that.

In addition to what she has already said in terms of vocabulary, Hera added,

Usually, if there is an error all the context in my writing is blamed on Grammarly Premium. But, if there is no error, they told us that we should add "the", but not every word used "the". So, I think it depends on us, meaning we want to decide whether to follow Grammarly's suggestion or not.

Nino (R₂)

In terms of vocabulary, I think Grammarly has some good recommendations such as synonyms. I can use the synonyms actually by double-clicking some words. There are some recommendations for the words to be used that have the same meanings or the synonyms of those words and maybe recommendations from the Grammarly Premium that I repeat some words in the paragraph so I may need to change but it's actually optional. But it is good for vocabulary.

Following their experiences, Hera found that Grammarly Premium helps her to check the use of vocabulary in her writing by giving some suggestions. Then, she found that usually Grammarly Premium suggests errors in feedback and over-checking in the word that didn't need to be checked. But, to solved these problems she used double-checking. Meanwhile Nino found that Grammarly Premium gives some good recommendations for synonyms of some words, check the writing if sometimes he repeats the same words, and then helps him by giving the good recommendations for vocabulary to change it.

Language

In response to the question related to how Grammarly Premium helps in terms of languages, Hera and Nino shares their experiences.

Hera (R₁)

It's very helpful for me. Because the only main aspect that they over for us is Grammar. It's really helpful because I'm a less careful person, so I often use the wrong verb. I mean sometimes the plural and singular are wrong.

Nino (R₂)

In terms of Language, I think like what I say before because English is not my first language some recommendations really work because sometimes maybe I don't write correctly or preferable to the native when using the language.

In line with the previous statement, Nino added the other experience during the use of this application. He added,

And then there are some recommendations that are really helpful such as when I use "because" or "and" I have a choice to divide it into two sentences or connect it with the end.

Other experience from Nino that he found there are some problems with the use of Grammarly Premium. He said,

But some problems also occur and happen when I use some words in Indonesian that is can't be translated into English such as the name of a place or the name of a thing. The name of the place is sometimes still the detection only focused in English so it is still checked as wrong and a red sign but actually, it is just the words of a name in Indonesian.

Nino also added other problems that occur when he uses Grammarly Premium. He added,

Yeah, even with Grammarly Premium you don't have to use all the recommendations because of some reasons and some mistakes in detection.

Following their experiences, Hera gave positive perceptions of Grammarly Premium in terms of language because this application helped her by giving suggestions when she used the wrong verb.

Meanwhile Nino gave positive perceptions because he found that the recommendations of Grammarly Premium has a good performance and gives helpful suggestions in terms of language that is the conjunction. But, Nino also gave the negative perceptions that Grammarly Premium was over-checking, and usually this application still detects the name of a place that doesn't use English. It makes those words checked as wrong. Nino also found that Grammarly Premium sometimes gives some mistakes in detection. But, Nino has a solution to solve these problems by added the Indonesian words to the feature of the dictionary in Grammarly Premium.

Mechanics

Regarding the question to explore Hera's and Nino's experiences with the use of Grammarly Premium in terms of mechanics, they expressed their insight.

Hera (R₁)

Yes, it's helpful too. Like it's not only about the grammar or the vocabulary, it helps me with punctuation and capitalization. Grammarly also detects that letters after the dot must be uppercase. Like a comma, among the things where there should be a comma. If I miss one, they will check it immediately.

Nino (R₂)

If I don't use Grammarly Premium I sometimes don't realize that it is there are some punctuation mistakes in my writing.

Following their experiences, Hera gave positive perceptions. Based on her experiences she shared suggestions of adding a comma, or something like after a dot she should use uppercase are the kinds of suggestions. So, based on her experiences, Hera gives positive perceptions about the way Grammarly gives her the feedback in terms of mechanics which are to check punctuation and

capitalization. In the other hand, Nino also gave positive perceptions. He believes that one kind of helpful mechanic is punctuation in Grammarly Premium.

3. Hera's and Nino's Experiences: After using Grammarly Premium

After using Grammarly Premium as an automatic writing evaluation in their academic writing, Hera and Nino described their experience.

Hera (R₁)

I feel very helpful. I was very helpful because even though I needed a double-checker and so forth, many things I learned and finally understood turned out that I was not careful. So, I was very helpful and many things I learned because when I double-checker I know whether this is true or not. Like "Is the writing right like this?" So from that, I find out more. I feel very helpful and this application is highly recommended, especially when writing articles or papers.

Compared to the Grammarly Free version with Grammarly Premium, Hera also shared her experience. She said,

Based on my experience error on Grammarly Free version is more often, but the premium Grammarly is not. And the Free one was told what part of the fault, but they did not give any kinds of suggestions. For example, our spelling is wrong, but Grammarly Free Version is only highlighted if it's wrong.

Nino (R₂)

I feel so much better when using Grammarly Premium version.

Compared to the Grammarly Free version with Grammarly Premium, Nino also shares his insight. He said,

Between the Free version and the premium version of course Premium version give so many features that I couldn't use in the Free version. There are some problems like some concessions and word choices. But, the premium version, is helpful for me in academic essays. Because there will be so many recommendations for selecting words to make the essay more complex.

Following Hera experience after using Grammarly Premium, Hera can learn a lot of new things. Because when she is double-checking, it means that she should make sure that the suggestion from Grammarly Premium is true or not. It makes her learn many things. Another experience that Hera shares about Grammarly Premium is more satisfying because if she used the Grammarly Free version it's only highlighted as wrong.

In the other hand, Nino found that after the use of Grammarly Premium, he feels so much better. Because of a lot of features and suggestions that Grammarly Premium gave to him. Following so many features in Grammarly Premium rather

than in the Free version, Nino found that the use of Grammarly Premium can make his writing more complex.

Discussions

From the data that have been obtained, the two participants generally shared positive perceptions during their experiences towards the use of Grammarly Premium as an automatic writing evaluation in the aspects of writing. According to Irwanto (2002), as cited in Ummah (2022), a positive perception is a perception that responds favorably to all input. As discussed previously, to produce good writing someone needs to pay attention to the aspects of writing. The five aspects of writing consisted of content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics (Byrne, 1993).

In terms of content, Nino found that this application helps to give information related to the content which is the content sound confident, sound friendly, or something else. It's related to one of Grammarly's Premium features in terms of writing suggestions delivery (Grammarly Inc). Then, in terms of organization both Hera and Nino gave positive perceptions because they can have some recommendations to paraphrase some of the sentences.

In terms of vocabulary, Hera and Nino found that this application helped them by giving some suggestions of vocabulary in terms of the synonyms of their vocabularies so that the consistency of vocabulary can be established properly. These findings are confirmed by Cavaleri (2016) who states Grammarly Premium provides several suggestions one of them is a vocabulary enhancement suggestion. Similarly, Ghufon and Rosyida (2018) found that Grammarly is effective in reducing several students' errors in writing, one of which is vocabulary.

Furthermore, in terms of language, Grammarly Premium helps Nino to check his Grammar by giving some suggestions for example conjunctions, so that every sentence can be connected well. This result is in line with the research conducted by Ghufon and Rosyida (2018) that showed Grammarly is effective in reducing students' errors in Grammar. Similarly, Lailika (2019) found that students have

positive perceptions of Grammarly to check their Grammar errors. Then Hera and Nino found another performance of Grammarly Premium that is correcting the wrong vocabulary more rather than Grammarly's Free version.

In terms of mechanics, Nino and Hera They found that when they used Grammarly Premium the feature of this application could be satisfying them in terms of mechanics because sometimes they didn't notice if there is wrong punctuation or capitalization in their writing. These results are in line with Ghufon and Rosyida (2018), who found that Grammarly can be correcting writing in terms of punctuation.

Every one of the aforementioned showed that Grammarly Premium is needed to help writer checking their writing in several aspects of writing to make their writing more readable and understandable because Grammarly Premium not only check their grammar mistakes but also give several suggestions like tone suggestions on their content, word and sentence variety, consistency of vocabulary, incorrect punctuation, and others. Hera and Nino also shared that after using this application they feel much better and they also can learn new things. It is in line with Karyuatry (2018), who found that by using Grammarly Premium the writer can improve their writing.

In the other hand, Nino and Hera also gave the negative perceptions. A negative perception is a perception that characterizes all information negatively or inappropriately for the perceived item (Irwanto, 2002 as cited in Ummah, 2022).

Based on the interview results, Hera found that in terms of vocabulary Grammarly Premium sometimes gives errors, feedback, and over-checking. Meanwhile, Nino found that Grammarly Premium was over-checking in terms of language because when he wrote a word in Indonesian, Grammarly Premium checked it as wrong and gave a red sign on that word. This finding is in line with research conducted by Nova (2018), who found that Grammarly has some weaknesses such as misleading feedback and over-checking. Similarly, Ummah (2022) found that Grammarly Premium still had unstable internet and gave inaccurate feedback. In line with that, Hera and Nino stated that they need to read first before deciding whether to follow Grammarly Premium suggestions or not.

Hera and Nino also shared their solution to solve these problems. To solve these problems, Hera double-checked her writing, meanwhile, Nino added Indonesian Words to the dictionary on Grammarly Premium.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of EFL Students' perception on the use of Grammarly Premium as an automatic writing evaluation in the aspects of writing based on their experiences showed that the two respondents give each aspect of writing positive and negative perceptions. The positive perception gave because they believe that Grammarly Premium helps them in their writing by giving suggestions in some important aspects of writing such as checking the tone of their content, giving suggestions to paraphrase their sentences so the readers can read clearly, and checking their grammatical errors like grammar, conjunction, vocabulary, also in terms of mechanics like punctuation and capitalization.

The reverse side, the participants also gave a negative perception. The negative perception because Hera and Nino found that in terms of vocabulary and language Grammarly Premium sometimes got errors and over-checking. Because of that, they need to read first before deciding to choose the suggestion from Grammarly Premium. But the respondent can solve these problems by double-checking and adding the Indonesian Words that are detected as wrong to the dictionary on Grammarly Premium.

Based on the finding of the study, it is addressed to English teacher and lecturer are expected not to hinder students from exploring new things that can be useful for students, such as the use of automatic writing evaluation tools on student writing, like the use of Grammarly Premium. But the teacher still plays a role by accompanying students in their process. Then the students are suggested to always explore technological advancements that can be utilized in their learning process. For future research, can investigate the same topic using other methods such as experimental research to find out how Grammarly Premium affects students' writing.

REFERENCES

- Al Mubarak, A. A. (2017). an Investigation of Academic Writing Problems Level Faced By Undergraduate Students At Al Imam Al Mahdi University Sudan. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 5(2), 175–188. [doi: 10.25134/erjee.v5i2.533](https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v5i2.533)
- Byrne, D. (1993). In Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers. *Teaching Writing Skills* (New Edition ed., pp. 15-18). London: Longman Group UK.
- Cavaleri, Michelle & Dianati, Saib. (2016). You want me to check your grammar again? The usefulness of an online grammar checker as perceived by students. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, A223-A236.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (Pearson new international edition, fourth edition). Pearson.
- Ghufron, M. A., & Rosyida, F. (2018). The Role of Grammarly in Assessing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Writing. *Lingua Cultura*, 12(4), 395-396. doi:10.21512/lc.v12i4.4582
- Karyuatry, L. (2018). Grammarly as a Tool to Improve Students' Writing Quality: Free Online-Proofreader across the Boundaries. *JSSH (Jurnal Sains Sosial Dan Humaniora)*, 2(1), 83-89. <https://doi.org/10.30595/jssh.v2i1.2297>
- Lailika, H. I. (2019). *Students' Perceptions of The Use of Grammarly as an Online Grammar Checker in Thesis Writing*. (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN, Surabaya)
Retrieved from <http://digilib.uinsby.ac.id>
- Ummah, L.K (2022). *EFL Students' Perception of Grammarly Premium's Feedback and How They Deal with The Inaccuracy*. (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN, Malang)
Retrieved from <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id>
- Nova, M. (2018). Utilizing Grammarly in Evaluating Academic Writing: a Narrative Research on Efl Students' Experience. *Premise: Journal of English Education*, 7(1), 80-96. <https://doi.org/10.24127/pj.v7i1.1332>

Setyowati, L. (2016). Analyzing the Students' Ability in Writing Opinion Essay using Flash Fiction. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 1(1), 79-91.