



## Exploring English Department Students' Perceptions on Using Grammarly to Check the Grammar in their Writing

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### Abstract

There are many online platforms which can help the students to check their grammar. To correct their writing, students usually use online grammar checkers such as Grammarly. This research was conducted to know the English department students' perspective of Grammarly software as the media to check the grammar in their writing. This research was conducted by using a descriptive qualitative method. The data of this research were taken through a questionnaire. By conducting this research, researchers hope that students can have an idea about Grammarly as one of the online grammar checkers. The result of this research showed that Grammarly gives beneficial for students. Grammarly really helps the students to correct their writing. However, Grammarly still has some drawbacks, such as mis correction and limited feature for the free version, yet students agree that Grammarly help them a lot.

### Keywords:

*English Department Students, perception, writing, Grammarly*

### INTRODUCTION

There are four fundamental skills to be mastered in English, one of those skills is writing. Writing is an important skill for English Department students. English becomes one of

the essential skills to be learned by English Department students due to the writing assignment, papers or articles in international journals, thesis and vice versa that need to be written in English. Moreover, writing is used as the bridge to share opinions that are claimed to an important role in life (Karyuatry, 2018).

Harmer (as cited in Khasanah, 2015, p.8) found that there are four main stages in the writing process. Those are planning, drafting, editing and revising, and final version. In editing, students will re-read their writing or their draft to check if there are any mistakes and errors, especially the grammar. In this stage, students usually find difficulties because they do not know the location of the grammar mistake or the grammatical error. When they do not know where the grammar in their writing went gone, they cannot correct what they did wrong. This problem will affect the final result of their writing. As a result, their writing will not be optimal.

Technology has revolutionized the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning and teaching and the inflow of ICT tools into the field has provided a growing range of possible solutions for refining teaching and learning inputs, processes, and outcomes (Pardede, 2020). One of the tools is Grammarly with which English Department students can easily check the grammar or the other mistakes in their writing. There are a lot of digital platforms which assist to help correct grammar or other writing errors. One of the digital platforms is Grammarly Software. Grammarly Software is digital writing assistance provided by an American-based Ukrainian technology company. This software can be accessed using a laptop or smartphone in the form of a web and application. Grammarly can check the writing mistakes in grammar, wordiness, punctuation, spelling, usage, style, and plagiarism. Grammarly also can give suggestion words to make students' writing more excellent. Besides, Grammarly not only checks writing mistake position but also gives the correction of it.

The studies about students' perception of Grammarly Software as the media to check the grammar in writing have been conducted by some researchers. The first study is a research conducted by Aidil (2019) which purpose of the research is to figure out the students' perception of Grammarly in helping their writing. The interview was used as the method in this research. The results of the data collection were analyzed descriptively. This research showed that participants of the research (students) stated that Grammarly helped them in correcting their academic writing. However, there are still drawbacks besides the advantages of Grammarly Software. The drawbacks are misleading feedback and over-correcting. The second study was conducted by Hafni (2019) aiming to find out students' perceptions of the use of Grammarly. The researcher employs survey research by administering a questionnaire to 54 students of English Teacher Education Department. The result of this study shows that the participants perceived that Grammarly is very useful for student but also some of student had negative view. They show that Grammarly is complicated application. The third research observed by Adelia (2021). The aims of this research are identify the usefulness of Grammarly application in the process of writing perceived by the students and to find out how to improve the use of Grammarly application in the process of writing in the future. English student class of 2017 was surveyed to collect the data. This study shows that student had positive point of view about using Grammarly as grammar checker. Nonetheless, the students generated suggestions for the betterment of the use of Grammarly. The first is internal aspects were the students' knowledge and attitude. The second is external aspects were the media, the feature, and the display of the application.

Therefore, this study will investigate the following questions:

1. What is the students' perception of English Department students towards Grammarly Software as the media to check the grammar in their writing?
2. What are the advantages of Grammarly?
3. What are the drawbacks of Grammarly?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Students' Perception**

According to William (2014), Perception is a manner to explain to people what people think. It is thought, knowledge, and interpretation that are obtained through understanding and thinking something (Webster, 2014). Robbins (2003) stated that perception is like an impression that individually gets through sensing then interpreting and analyzing to produce understanding. Student's perception can be defined as student context about their learning style that includes their personality which is visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing person. It also refers as students thought and belief about a current phenomenon. In this research, students' perception related to student's thoughts and given ideas in the use of Grammarly application which is focused on the manner how they adapted themselves to improve performance in their academic writing (Jamulia, 2018).

### **Grammarly**

Grammarly is an online proofreading website that can be used to scan documents for grammar mistakes (Karyuatry, 2018). It also can be defined as internet-based tools to check many errors such as punctuation, misspelling, etc. Grammarly has many features such as grammar and punctuation, spell check, plagiarism, and writing style. In grammar and punctuation feature the user can detect the basic and advanced grammar error, alliteration, fragments, etc. Meanwhile in spell check feature it can check every word in your writing that contains misspelling. In plagiarism feature, the user can scan the file for many cases of plagiarism. The last is writing style feature, the user can know some offering tips, advice or suggestion in writing style.

There are two types of Grammarly: premium and free. The two types are differentiated based on the payment per month or year. Grammarly Premium is an automated proofreading system that can identify errors related to 250 grammar rules (Grammarly Inc., 2017). The cost of using the Grammarly premium is \$29.95 per month. However, free Grammarly consists of fewer features than premium. To use this application, first, the users must be login into this website by using their email. Then, the users upload their assignment and next they will see two scores. The first score is based on a percentage of accuracy, and the second is the total errors that the program has found. Grammarly organizes the errors according to six categories: contextual spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, style, and vocabulary enhancement (O'Neil, 2019).

### **Grammar**

According to Swan (1980) grammar is the rules that say how words are arranged, combined, and changed to present different meaning. Hartwell (1985) also states that grammar is like a set of formal patterns which is the word of a language are ordered in

order to inform larger meaning and message. Meanwhile, Nunan states that grammar is a description of structure of a language and the manner which units such as words and phrases are arranged to produce sentences in a language. From this statement, it can be concluded that grammar is a set of structure that are arranged and combined in order to present the meaning. There are sixteen tenses in the English language with their complexity on specific verb form changes and uses in utterances or sentences. It is closely different from the Indonesian language that there are no specific tenses and no specific verb form uses and changes in sentences. In tenses, the writers have to combine and relate some parts of grammar, like the subject, adverbs, articles, objects, adjectives, verbs, conjunction and so forth. Grammar also can be defined as the way to arrange the sentence and create a good language, analyze the form of a sentence that has a meaning, and as a forming of a meaning form based on combination of word and how language works.

### **Writing**

Nunan (2003:88) states that writing is an intellectual activity on finding the idea and thinking about the manner to express and arrange them into a statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by the people. It showed that the researchers are prosecuted to show their ideas and thought and arrange them into a good paragraph. Besides, writing presents the researchers' ideas in finding issues that are showed in public. It requires a combination of systematically writing. It refers to an activity to express or show our idea, feeling, amotions, and thinking in written format that can be use as communication to the other people. Writing is one of the skills that acquire the knowledge or information which is need to be shared or learned to the other people. Besides that, in writing it contains the information so the reader can know the meaning well.

According to White and Amdlt (1991) in Desi Nur Komariyah (2015:1), writing is a thought process which is demanded bright effort, and it includes generating ideas, plan, achieving goal setting, monitor, and evaluating. It indicates that writing consists of a lot of stages that should be done by the researchers in delivering the meaning of writing. There are four processes in writing according to Harmer (2004), they are:

#### **a. Planning**

In this stage, people usually make a list of ideas related to the topic and they should consider three main issues such as the purpose, the audience, and content.

#### **b. Drafting**

In this stage, people will start to write the ideas which they are going to write without considering the mistakes they make.

#### **c. Editing**

In this stage, people should re-write their first draft after finishing it to see if it works or not after. Besides, the processes in editing may take oral or written feedback from peers. The feedback will help them to revise their writing.

#### **d. Final Version**

In this stage, people will re-write the draft after revising it with peers and have a well-written text in the final

### **E. Automated Written Corrective Feedback**

According to Jimm Ranalli (2018) stated that Automated Written Corrective Feedback (AWCF) is a notion linked to WCF, where the feedback is provided automatically in a

generic structure. Automated written corrective feedback (AWCF) is a tool that has qualities in distinguishing it from teacher-provided WCF and potentially undermine claims about its value for L2 student writers, such as disparities in the amounts of useful information it provides across error types and the fact that inaccuracies in error-flagging must be anticipated. Automatic written corrective feedback also provides the qualities in distinguishing from teacher that is provided WCF and undermine claims the L2 student writer.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study will employ case study with descriptive qualitative approach because it focuses on understanding social events from the perspective of human participant, as Creswell (2014) stated that case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator investigates a case or cases over time in detailed data collection (involving observation, interview, and documentations) and finds out a report consisting of the studied-case themes. This study will be conducted in the sixth semester of English Department in Universitas Tidar. The researcher will use questionnaire and conduct a semi-structured interview to get deep data. It will be conducted in the sixth semester of English department students of Tidar University in the school year 2020/2021. The researcher will use questionnaire and interview to gain the data.

### **Participants**

This research was conducted in English Department in Universitas Tidar. The population of this research was 150 students of the English Department in the sixth semester. 30 participants were chosen as sampling techniques to find suitable participants for this research.

### **Instruments**

Gulo (2000) stated that the research instrument is a written guide about interviews, or observations, or questionnaires, prepared for information. Instruments are called observation guides or interview guides or questionnaires or guidelines documentary, according to the method used. Because this research is qualitative research, the researcher acts as an instrument and data collector. Non-human instruments such as questionnaires is also used, but the function is limited as a researcher's supporter task as a key instrument. An important instrument in qualitative research is the research itself. Researcher participation in data collection determines the validity of the data collected in the research.

### **Procedures**

In this research, the researchers used descriptive qualitative research as the methodology of collecting and analyzing the data. Qualitative research is very appropriate to this research since it allows the researcher to get deep data from the object of the research. Qualitative research is also the best methodology for making the study in a natural setting (Khan, 2014). As Creswell (2014) states that a research design that focuses on the phenomenon or discovers social problems. Based on the topic of the study, this research is about a social phenomenon that is purposed in investigating how the student's perception on using Grammarly to check grammar in writing. The process of this research

includes distribute a questionnaire, collecting the data in the participant's setting, analyzing the data inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher doing interpretations of the meaning of the data and the final written report has a flexible structure (Creswell, 2014).

To collect the data, the researchers employed the questionnaire developed by Hafni (2019). The survey was conducted online using Google form. To get valid data, the writer use triangulation, thus the researcher conducted semi-structured interview. The interview is conducted through WhatsApp due to the Covid-19 pandemic which made it impossible to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interview. The questions in the semi-structured interview are related to the participants' responses in the questionnaire. These questions are to make sure the participants' answer, so the writer can get valid data.

In this research, the researcher used Google form to get the participants based on the criteria that mentioned previously in research participant section. After the participants were selected, researcher gave them a consent form concerning with their agreement to be involved in this research. After the participants give response in the Google Form, they were asked some questions in semi-structured interview through WhatsApp.

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## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Advantages of Using Grammarly**

In this findings and discussion part would be elaborated data based on questionnaire and interview the participant. The interview was hold to accomplish the research questions as follow; what is the advantages of Grammarly, what are the drawbacks of Grammarly, and what are students' perceptions of Grammarly as the media to help them correct the grammar in their writing. Regarding to the first topic of this interview, all participants have shared their perception of using Grammarly. All participants admitted that Grammarly has benefit in improving grammar in their writing. They realized that Grammarly help them to learn by themselves. They can also see the automatic correction that is provided by Grammarly. By this feature, they can know the word that has a mistake in structure, so they can re-think again to use the appropriate word. Grammarly is also good in detecting small mistake, like the use of article 'a' or 'an'.

### **The Drawbacks of Using Grammarly**

Nevertheless, Grammarly still has some drawbacks. All participants have shared their perception of using Grammarly and the drawbacks they face. When they check their writing using Grammarly, sometimes the correction from Grammarly make the meaning changes. Besides, some participants are not sure with the correction from Grammarly. They have to re-read their writing and check it before they follow the correction from Grammarly. Moreover, Grammarly has two versions: free and premium. According to the participants' voice, free version of Grammarly restricting them from using Grammarly's features as a whole.

### **The Students' Perceptions of Grammarly as The Media to Help Them Correct the Grammar in Their Writing**

The researchers distributed questionnaire to find out the answer of the research problems. The questionnaire was conducted to know students' perceptions about using Grammarly to check grammar in their writing. It consisted of 14 questions. Besides that, the researcher holds an interview to get deep information that support the result of questionnaire. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 1 shows that students' perception about using Grammarly to check grammar in their writing. It can be seen that 20% of participants agreed using Grammarly is not efficient when students use free application that only have grammar checking limitations. Grammarly website or application also increases students learning performance in correcting grammar in their writing. It can be seen that 46,7% strongly agree that in EFL environment where English is not used for everyday conversation, having Grammarly supporting media to check grammar in writing is very useful. This statement is supported by the result of the interview which shows that Grammarly is very helpful for their writing assignments compared to other free grammar checkers. They think Grammarly is the most promising, satisfying and quite accurate, so every time they have a writing assignment or an article, they always use Grammarly. In addition to this one, what they like about Grammarly is that it is very good at detecting small errors such as the use of articles 'a' or 'an', which they sometimes flip back and forth unconsciously when writing assignments or articles, so this is very helpful for them.

The use of Grammarly, can increase the student motivation in learning grammar. It can be seen that 40% agree about this question. However, their statement in interview is different from the questionnaire. Some participants said that Grammarly is not increase their motivation in learning grammar. Although they learn a lot of knowledge about grammar through Grammarly, indeed when there is a correction, they re-read the sentence and it is just their habit, even without using Grammarly they will do the same thing, so they think in this case it does not really affect their motivation to learn something like that. Students can check their mistake in grammar such as misspelling, wrong structure, punctuation by using Grammarly. 46,7% of student feel strongly agree about this statement. Grammarly has benefit in learning process because it provides complete feature and easy to use, so the students feel helped by using this application that 60% of participant agreed. 56,7% of the participants also disagree if they find difficulty when using the Grammarly. Although Grammarly does not provide Indonesian language option, students can still use the features contained in Grammarly because it is very simple and easy to operate.

Table 1. Students' perception about using Grammarly to check grammar in their writing.

No.	Question	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Grammarly is not efficient when students use free applications.	10%	16,7%	33,3%	20%	20%
2.	Grammarly helps the students to check grammar.	0%	0%	10%	43,3%	46,7%
3.	Grammarly increases student motivation to learn.	3,3%	6,7%	36,7%	40%	13,3%
4.	By using Grammarly media, students can find out their grammar mistakes.	0%	0%	10%	43,3%	46,7%
5.	Grammarly provides complete features and easy-to-use procedures.	0%	0%	13,3%	53,3%	33,3%
6.	I feel helped by the Grammarly.	3,3%	0%	6,7%	30%	60%
7.	Grammarly is easy to use for correcting grammar.	0%	0%	3,3%	36,7%	60%
8.	Grammarly is convenient to use for correcting grammar.	0%	0%	13,3%	40%	46,7%
9.	The Grammarly is very flexible in its use.	0%	0%	6,7%	43,3%	50%
10.	Grammarly really helps students to correct grammar.	0%	0%	10%	43,3%	46,7%
11.	I feel frustrated by using Grammarly when there are still many grammar issues found.	6,7%	20%	33,3%	26,7%	13,3%
12.	I feel the Grammarly consumes more quota.	20%	30%	36,7%	10%	3,3%
13.	I'm not sure with the correctness of grammar by using Grammarly	6,7%	46,7%	30%	10%	6,7%
14.	I find difficulty when using the Grammarly application because it does not provide an Indonesian language option.	20%	56,7%	13,3%	6,7%	3,3%

Based on the results from the interview, some participants stated that Grammarly really helped them to check their writing. They can also gain new knowledge in some ways, sometimes it is more like reminding themselves of grammar material. 46,7% of participant agreed that Grammarly is convenient to use for correcting grammar and help student to correct grammar. 26,7 % of participants feel frustrated with the many grammar issues found when they check their writing using Grammarly. It is because when they check their grammar in Grammarly, there will be score and grammar issues which cannot

be fixed all by using free (not premium) Grammarly, so they find it a little frustrating. However, Grammarly is quite effective because it does not take up too much quota. It can be seen from the questionnaire result, which shows that 30% of participants disagree if Grammarly is said to be an application that consumes quite a lot of quota compared to other grammar checking applications. Besides, correction results from Grammarly are also reliable. It can be seen from the results of the questionnaire which shows that 46,7% of the participants did not agree if the correction from Grammarly was not convincing and inaccurate. However, some participants who are asked in the interview said that sometimes, correction from Grammarly can help but sometimes it does not. In fact, it can cause a different meaning if they follow the correction from Grammarly.

Based on their experience, they have checked using Grammarly which is free (not premium). Usually if their grammar is wrong, there is a red mark then there is an option for improvement in the form of terms or other structures that can be used. The problem is sometimes the correction makes the sentence out of sync with the following or before, that is why some participants are not sure with the correction from Grammarly. Based on the results from the interview, some students unconsciously learn grammar while they are checking the grammar of their writing through Grammarly. It can be inferred from their statements during the interview. They said when they find signs for grammar correction from Grammarly, they always read the sentence first. Sometimes they also read the sentence before and after it to make sure that the correction does not change the meaning and context of their writing. From that testimony, it can be seen that with doubts about the correction of Grammarly, it makes students learn grammar more deeply.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study above, the research questions are answered. It can be said that the respondents are really helped by Grammarly as the media to check the grammar in their writing. This statement is evidenced by the result of the questionnaire. Most of respondents agree that Grammarly has many advantages which help them. However, Grammarly still has some drawbacks such as what have been stated by the respondents. The drawbacks are fewer convincing corrections, changes in the meaning of sentences caused by correction suggestions from Grammarly, limited correction for the free version.

The previous study conducted by Aidil (2019) shows the same result with this study. That study entitled “Exploring Students’ Perception on the Effectiveness of “Grammarly Software” In Academic Writing (A Case Study at English Language Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry)” evidence that Grammarly in students’ perception helps the students to check their grammar. Grammarly also has many advantages. However, the study shows that Grammarly has disadvantages, same with the finding of this research.

The result of this study confirms Hafni’s (2019) and Adelia’s findings concerning students’ positive perceptions towards Grammarly. However, there are some points from the previous findings which are not found in this research, such as students negative view about Grammarly and students’ recommendations for the bettermen of the use of Grammarly from internal and external aspects.

Despite its limitations, the research questions are answered. The questions for this study about the students’ perceptions towards Grammarly, the advantages of the

Grammarly, and the disadvantages of the Grammarly are answered by the finding of this research. There are no unanswered questions.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

There are four fundamental skills to be mastered in English, one of those skills is writing. Writing is an important skill for English Department students. Due to they learn writing, there will definitely be tasks related to writing, such as practicing writing, writing journal articles, writing proposals, and much more. In making writing assignments, of course, students will need an application or website to check their assignments, especially on the grammar. In response to this problem, Grammarly application and website are investigated through the perception of students of the English Education Department at Universitas Tidar towards Grammarly as an online grammar checker. The result of this research shows that Grammarly has both advantages and drawbacks. Grammarly helps the students to check the grammar in their writing. Grammarly is easy to use and has complete feature. Compared to other online grammar checkers, Grammarly is a platform that does not take up a lot of quota. Grammarly is also very good at detecting small errors such as the use of articles 'a' or 'an', which sometimes flip back and forth unconsciously when writing assignments or articles. However, the correction from Grammarly is not always right. Sometimes, the correction from Grammarly change the meaning of the writing and sometimes the correction makes the sentence out of sync with the following or before. Actually, this lack of Grammarly has a positive impact on students, because students are unconsciously learning while re-reading their writings that are corrected by Grammarly. They can recall their memories about grammar material, such as punctuation, article, pattern, and vice versa while checking their grammar using Grammarly. All in all, although Grammarly has shortcomings, Grammarly provides more assistance to students in checking their grammar, especially for English Education students. Grammarly also has many advantages, such as complete features, saving quota, good at detecting small errors in writing, and many more.

This research surely has some drawbacks. To make the better further studies, the researcher suggest the further researchers to conduct research with the same topic but for the different respondents, such as senior high school students. The realm is also better if it is different, for example to know the use of Grammarly for reading skill, because studies about Grammarly for writing skill are too much already. By conducting other research with more varies of realms and participants, the researcher hopes the further findings will complete the lack of this study.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

In order to complete the data as evidence for our article, the author hereby submits a questionnaire regarding English department students' perceptions on using Grammarly to check the grammar in their writing. The result of this questionnaire will be used as preparation of our article. The researcher understands that participants' time is very limited and valuable. The researcher would like to thank the participants for their willingness to take the time to answer all questions in questionnaire. The researchers also thank to the informants who have been willing to take the time to interview.

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