"Grammarly" as English Writing Assistant from EFL Students' Perspective

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Abstract

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) has been regarded as a viable pedagogical approach that utilizes technology to assist EFL students' writing. Writing becomes one of the important skills in English at any proficiency level. Hence, this study aimed to determine what EFL students thought about using Grammarly to check their work for grammar errors. Moreover, this research also describes the students' frequency in using Grammarly to improve their writing. This study used descriptive qualitative methods to explore the students' perspective in using Grammarly to check their work for grammar when writing articles. In addition, this study used non-probability sampling employing a purposive sampling technique. To assess the perception, researchers tracked 40 EFL students using a close-ended questionnaire with five indicators of Likert scale. At the same time, interviews were used as data triangulation. According to the results, most EFL students have a favorable view of utilizing Grammarly as an online grammar checker to assist them in writing articles. As an English writing helper, evidence showed that Grammarly could check for grammatical and stylistic errors. This study has thus far shed light on the good and bad aspects of utilizing Grammarly among EFL students. In general, EFL students think Grammarly's capabilities help write an article.

Keywords: *Grammarly, Online Grammar Checker, Writing Process, EFL Students' Perspective*

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) may sound like a technology from the future that will transform human life. Yet, AI is no longer the technology of the future. Developments throughout the history of AI have brought many uses of AI developed in various sectors such as manufacturing, automotive, economics, and education. Technological developments in education, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education combined with AI, have provided possible solutions to improve teaching-learning inputs, processes, and outcomes. Due to the foreignness of the language used, English Foreign Language (EFL) students may make errors in several aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar, when writing and concluding an English phrase (Fitria, 2021). The majority of their errors occur unintentionally since EFL students are unaware of them. As a result, it is critical to focus on characteristics of effective writing, such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar (Smith, 2013). Grammar, along with spelling and punctuation, is characterized by Perdana and Farida (2019) as one of the linguistic

components of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing. One of the linguistic skills that technology may help to enhance is writing (Pratama, 2020).

Computational linguistics was created to evaluate and score the text submitted to the program (Ferster et al., 2012; Wilson & Czik, 2016; Wilson & Andrada, 2016). It leads to writing at the lexical, syntactic, discourse, and grammar levels (Chen & Cheng, 2008). One of the artificial intelligence operations, especially in writing evaluation is anointed Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE). The term AWE program has focused on enhanced writing and used sophisticated language processing technology to deliver real-time holistic grading and constructive feedback (Fahmi & Cahyono, 2021; Herry, 2019).

Pursuing this further, EFL students may preview the assessment results by reviewing the comments and corrections offered by the system, allowing them to improve their writing instantly based on the evaluation delivered by the system and save time on checking and assessing the writing. The AWE program is considered an excellent tool to help users evaluate writing because it accommodates diagnostic features (Fahmi & Cahyono, 2021). One of the tools is Grammarly Software, with which English Department students can quickly check grammar or other errors in their writing (Fitriana & Nurazmi, 2021). Grammarly Software is an online grammar checker aid provided by an American-based Ukrainian technology company. This software can be accessed using a laptop or smartphone in the form of a web application. Grammarly Software can check for spelling errors such as grammar, words, punctuation, spelling, usage, style, and even plagiarism. In that case, it can also provide word suggestions to make students' writing better. In particular, Grammarly not only checks the position of writing errors but also provides corrections. Mammadova (2019) reported that grammar and spelling checker online software recreates a significant function in English language teaching and learning.

This software, which has many advantages, certainly encourages EFL students to be more creative and innovative in writing English language articles. The majority of studies on EFL students' perceptions of using Grammarly and the feedback on their writing have been done, including research on the use of Grammarly by students was also conducted by Fitriana and Nurazni (2022), where their research aims to find out about English department students' perspective of Grammarly software as the media to check the grammar in their writing. Their research shows that Grammarly has many benefits and uses for students, such as correcting grammatical errors in their writing. In addition, it is known that Grammarly is easy to use and has quite complete features. It also doesn't take up a lot of internet quota. However, it was also found that Grammarly has several shortcomings, which is the correction of Grammarly is not always correct, and sometimes the correction of the program can change the meaning of the sentence. Another drawback is that the free Grammarly features are very limited. Fahmi and Cahyono's (2021) research also looked into students' perceptions of using Grammarly and teachers' feedback on their writing and whether students' English proficiency level influenced their perceptions. According to the study's findings, Grammarly aided the teacher in dealing with time restrictions and providing thorough feedback on language proficiency. The teacher decided to devote extra time to help students revise their writing content and structure due to the real-time feedback. Even so, the teacher's role in evaluating and providing feedback on student writing is essential. Due to using Grammarly, there is still misleading feedback and some errors that are not detected by the programn (Setyawan, 2022). Meanwhile, with feedback from the teacher, students can find out about small errors that the program did not notice. Their research also

knows that English proficiency level did not influence the students' perception of the use of Grammarly and Teacher feedback in the English for Specific Purpose writing course.

Furthermore, Miranty and Widiati (2021) conducted a study of Grammarly among Indonesian undergraduate EFL students to learn about the writing process as well as the benefits and limits of Grammarly used. According to this study, there were no variations in perceptions of Grammarly use among students of different cohorts. The students in the study thought that proofreading services were essential to producing effective writing and that one of Grammarly's benefits was proofreading programs. Grammarly's feedback is difficult to understand, insufficiently thorough, or not fulfill their expectations. Unlike the first-year students, the second and third-years students disagreed that Grammarly's corrections were not consistently practical.

The above studies fundamentally focus on using Grammarly, which can help EFL students do assignments or other activities to check their writing. To date, there are few studies that indicate a need to understand the perceptions of using Grammarly that exist among EFL students, especially in the context of writing articles. The researchers are considering this issue because in writing articles, grammar is prioritized so that the readers don't have trouble understanding the context/content of their writing. Moreover, Grammarly has feedback that can help them check their errors while writing an article. Another consideration is that EFL students are referred to as 3rd-year students who are expected to be able to write articles. Hence, this study tried to analyze and discuss the EFL students' perspectives and opinions on using Grammarly in the process of writing articles and how often they use Grammarly in their writing. The specific objective of this study was to investigate the EFL students' perspectives and opinions on using Grammarly in the process of writing articles. Besides, this study also provides new insights into how often they use Grammarly in their writing.

METHOD

This study applied descriptive qualitative, which aims to investigate EFL students' perspectives and opinions on using Grammarly to check their grammar in writing articles. The subject of this study was EFL students in their 3rd year in one of the state universities in Indonesia, which came from the English Education Department Study Program. Additionally, non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Thus, 40 of 120 EFL students participated in this study. The technique to get the data sources in this study was a close-ended questionnaire adapted to the research article by Pratama (2020); Fitriana and Nurazni (2022), who researcher examined using Grammarly as an online grammar checker. In addition, the Likert scale is used as a measurement scale with five indicators: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data was obtained from the EFL students by filling out questionnaires toward Microsoft Form with 21 statements and 4 questions. The statements divide into three sections that aim to obtain EFL students' perspectives and opinions about using Grammarly in the process of writing an article. Then, the questions section seeks to get EFL students about their frequency of using Grammarly in the process of writing articles. Moreover, interviews were used as data triangulation to increase the validity of the research problems.

Here are the questionnaires adapted to the research article by Pratama (2020); Fitriana and Nurazni (2022), which were designed to measure the following perspective and opinions of students:

Table 1. Statements of Questionnaire (Section 1)

No.	Statements
Students' Perception About the Content of Grammarly	
1	Grammarly can cover the use of subject, verb, preposition, etc.
2	Grammarly spelling feature can correct your mistakes in spelling the word.
3	Grammarly can correct your punctuation error in the writing process.
Students' Perception About the Feedback of Grammarly	
4	Grammarly can help you to correct the language style in the process of writing an article.
5	Grammarly can correct your grammatical error in the process of writing an article.
6	Grammarly is beneficial to correct your errors in the process of writing an article.
7	Grammarly provide explanations that can improve your writing skills.
8	Grammarly also makes you feel more confident because the feature of Grammarly can correct your errors in the process of writing.
9	Grammarly does not make you confuse because the explanation is easy to understand.
10	You do not feel difficulty in using Grammarly in the process of writing an article.
11	You need good internet accessibility in using Grammarly to get the feedback.

Table 2. Statements of Questionnaire (Section 2)

No.	Statements
Students' Opinion About the Use of Grammarly	
1	The Grammarly is very flexible in its use.
2	Grammarly increases student motivation to learn.
3	Grammarly provides complete features and easy-to-use procedures.
4	Grammarly is easy to use for correcting grammar.
5	Grammarly is convenient to use for correcting grammar.
6	Grammarly is not efficient when students use free applications.
7	I feel frustrated by using Grammarly when there are still many grammar issues found.
8	I feel the Grammarly consumes more quota.
9	I'm not sure with the correctness of grammar by using Grammarly
10	I find difficulty when using the Grammarly application because it does not provide an Indonesian language option.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers discuss the results of the questionnaires that have been obtained from EFL students' responses, which purposed to know their perspectives and opinions about using Grammarly to check grammar in the writing article. It consisted of 21 statements and 4 questions. In addition, the researcher holds some interviews to get details information that supports the result of the questionnaire. To obtain the data, the authors compiled questionnaires, as shown below.

Students' Perspectives About the Content of Grammarly

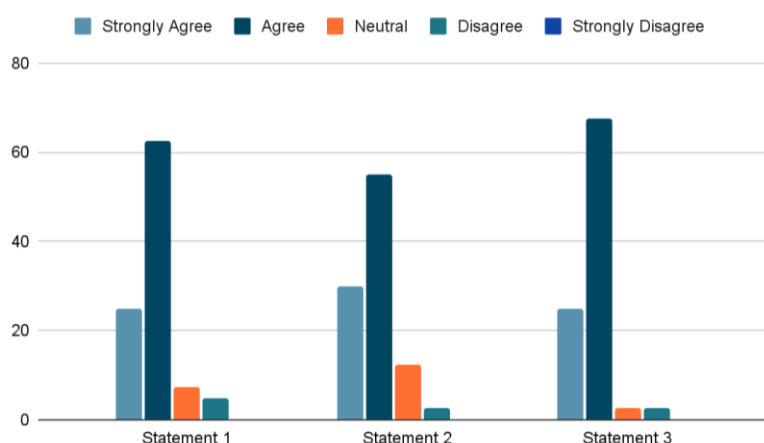Figure 1. Students' Perspectives About the Content of Grammarly

Figure 1 illustrates the participants' opinions on Grammarly's content and feedback. EFL students have positive responses to the content of Grammarly in the process of writing an article. The researchers classified the statements about the content of Grammarly, such as grammar features, spelling features, and punctuation features. Moreover, there believed that Grammarly can cover the use of subject, verb, prepositions, and many more. It was illustrated in the number 1 that 25% (Strongly Agree) and 62.5% (Agree). Besides this, as many as 30% (Strongly Agree) and 55% (Agree) indicated that EFL students believed that Grammarly's spelling features could correct their spelling errors. Most EFL students (67.5%) agreed that Grammarly could correct their punctuation errors in the writing process. Hence, the Grammarly content is considered very beneficial for EFL students in the process of writing, particularly in writing articles. Since the EFL students mostly made many errors in grammatical, word spelling, or punctuation, they required those features. One of them argued that he could easily check his grammar while writing an article using Grammarly.

> "The corrections from Grammarly are thorough; from grammar, punctuation, writing style, to the use of subjects, verbs, adjectives, and so on. There is also a brief explanation of the error, so you can know why it's wrong. If there is a typo, the error will also be detected. So, if you're writing articles like that, Grammarly is really helpful." **(EFL Student 1)**

Students' Perspectives About the Feedback of Grammarly

Figure 2. Students' Perspectives About the Feedback of Grammarly
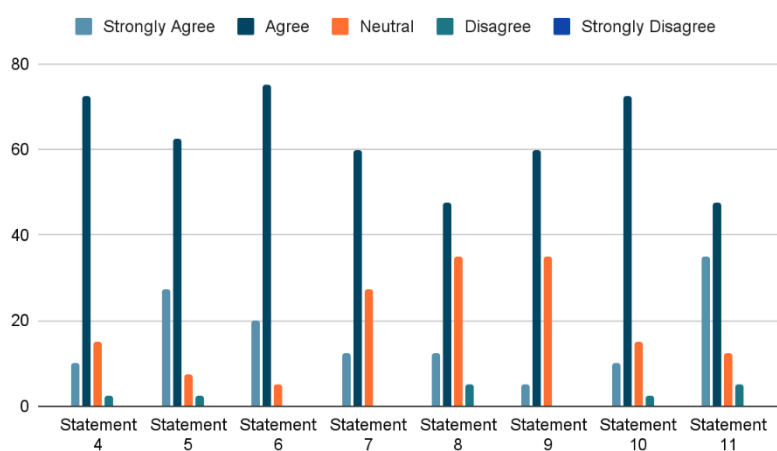
Pursuing this further, figure 2 shows the students' perspectives of using Grammarly viewed from the feedback it provides. Based on the figure,is was portrayed that 72% of participants agreed with the statement number 4 because they believed that Grammarly could help them correct the language style since they are still confused with it. Likewise, as many as 27.5% (Strongly Agree) and 62.5% (Agree) on number 5 indicated that Grammarly could correct students' grammatical errors in writing an article. As seen in number 6, most EFL students agreed that Grammarly is beneficial for detecting grammatical errors in writing an article. The most important clinically relevant finding was Grammarly can help students in their writing by correcting their mistakes in language style, grammar, punctuation, and processes in writing (Pratama, 2020; Setyawan, 2022). Thus, the researchers restated that Grammarly certainly can help EFL students' confidence in the process of writing articles. Next, number 7 showed that 60% agreed and 27% were neutral with the statement. Generally, even Grammarly can

provide an excellent explanation to improve writing skill. However, sometimes they are not relevant to the context, so the EFL students are still unsure about the Grammarly explanation. Similarly, based on the number 8, Grammarly's feedback also makes some of them feel more confident with their article. Yet, as many as 35% of EFL students are unsure of their confidence since the features of Grammarly are suitable to give the best suggestions in writing an article or not. In the same way, for number 9 was found that 60% of EFL students agreed and 35% were neutral, it was indicated that the explanation of Grammarly sometimes does not make students confused instead, the explanation is easy to understand. One unanticipated finding was that Grammarly definitely could improve students' writing skills by providing feedback. In giving feedback, Grammarly provides clear and easy-to-understand explanations which do not make students confused (Pratama, 2020). In contrast, Grammarly feedback being out of the line with the writers' goals even though they change the intended meaning and emphasis of the sentence (Nova, 2018). Thus, Grammarly only can check the word, grammar, punctuation, and so forth, not the names of places, people, etc. And last, in the numbers 10 and 11, they mostly agreed that Grammarly is easy to use to write an article since using Grammarly, EFL students do not to had to understand the grammar well first. Nonetheless, Grammarly needs good internet accessibility in using Grammarly to get the best feedback, which appears to confirm Fitria's (2021) statement that using the Grammarly application to evaluate English grammar requires an internet connection.

Students' Opinion About the Use of Grammarly

Figure 3. Students' Opinions About Using Grammarly

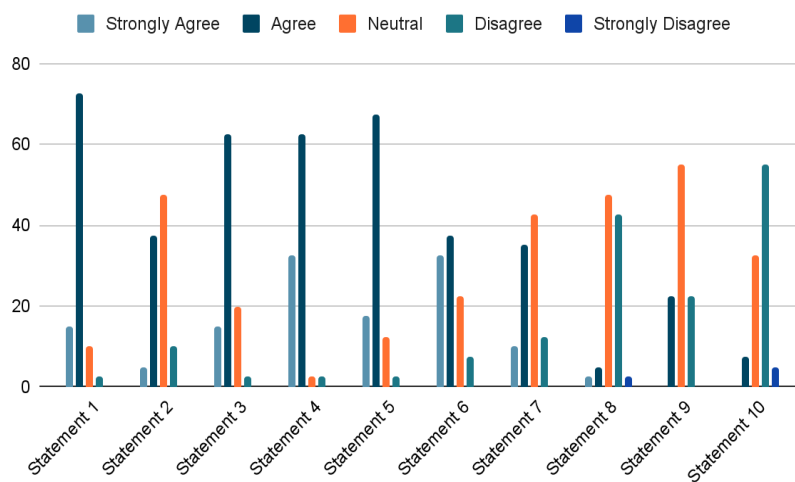

Figure3 shows students' opinions on using Grammarly in the process of writing articles. Researchers present ten statements about the use of Grammarly, such as flexibility, convenience, efficiency, and accuracy of correction. From the results shown in the figure, the response is also positive. It is shownthat there are 15% (Strongly Agree) and 72.5% (Agree) responded to statement number 1. This shows that most students (87.5%) believe that the use of Grammarly is very flexible. The response for number 2 is that almost half of the respondents (47.5%) answered neutral, indicating that they do not feel that Grammarly increases their motivation to learn but also does not decrease their motivation. For number 3, with 15% (Strongly Agree) and 62.5% (Agree), it shows that most students (77.5%) believe that Grammarly has complete features and is easy to use. Fitriana & Laeli's (2022) research stated that using Grammarly is easy and the application also provides complete features. Followed by statements number 4 and 5, in statement number 4, 32.5% of respondents strongly agree and 62.5% agree and in

number 5, 17.5% answered strongly agree and 67.5% answered agree. This means that most of the students (95% and 85%) agree that Grammarly is convenient and easy to use for correcting Grammar. That also supports the research results by Fahmi & Cahyono (2021) that the use of Grammarly is very easy and practical. As well as one student said that Grammarly is fully featured and easy to use, especially in correcting grammar, and it is also convenient.

> "The display is simple, the features for correction are complete. On the right side of the screen—if you're using a laptop—it shows the percentage of errors in grammar, punctuation, and then there's... sort of ... sentence structure. Next to it, there is a display of errors in our writing. There are words that need to be replaced, punctuation that needs to be corrected, yes, something like that. How to fix the error just need to click on the suggested justification. It's really easy."**(EFL Student 2)**

Further on the use of Grammarly in the process of writing articles, in number 6, it is shown that 32.5% (Strongly Agree) and 37.5% (Agree) agree with the statement, which means that most of the students (70%) agree that Grammarly is not efficient if they use the free version of the application. This is in line with the statement put forward by Fitria (2021) that the free version of the English grammar check service has limits and a lack of service tools, but the paid version offers full benefits, has various functions, and is advanced. This also supports the results of Fitriana & Laeli's (2022) research, which states that using the non-premium version of Grammarly is less efficient due to feature limitations. Number 7 shows that 10% answered strongly agree and 35% agree with the statement, indicating that 45% of students feel frustrated if there are still many grammar errors after using Grammarly to correct them. According to one of the students, it was noted that the student is not sure about the correction from Grammarly when they find that the correction from Grammarly is not correct and feel frustrated because of it.

> "So, sometimes, the correction is not correct. For example, the text is short, then it's also a dialogue text—so, just want to correct one sentence—the error is not detected. Or, when we really want to write in passive but Grammarly shows that it must be changed to active. It is frustrating."**(EFL Student 3)**

Meanwhile, in statement number 8, it is shown that 47.5% of respondents answered neutrally, 42.5% disagreed, and 2.5% strongly disagreed with the statement, which means that Grammarly does not consume a lot of internet quota in its use. Supporting statement number 7, in statement number 9, more than half of the total respondents (55%) answered neutrally, indicating that students feel confident but also unsure of the results of grammar correction using Grammarly. Finally, in number 10, 55% of respondents answered disagree, indicating that they did not find difficulties in using Grammarly even though the application did not provide Indonesian language options.

Table 3. The Results of Questions Section

No.	Questions	Answers
1	What kind of device have you ever used in operating Grammarly to check your writing?	Gadget/Mobile Phone (15%) PC/Laptop (85%)
2	How long is the duration of using it?	More than an hour in a day (35%) Less than an hour in a day (65%)

3	What kind of text do you usually check for your writing?	Article/Mini Research (71%) Assignment (30%)
4	Is Grammarly the only software to check your grammar?	Yes (90%) No (10%)

Table 3 shows the use of Grammarly, device used to access, duration of use, corrected text, and whether they only use Grammarly to correct their writing. From the table, it can be seen that 85% of students use a PC or laptop to access Grammarly, while the other 15% use a mobile phone. In using the app, 65% used Grammarly for no more than an hour a day, while the remaining (35%) used Grammarly for more than an hour a day. For texts checked using Grammarly, 71% answered that they used Grammarly to proofread articles/mini research, while another 30% used Grammarly to proofread assignments. Then, lastly, most (90%) students admitted that the application for correcting grammar they used was only Grammarly, while the other 10% did not only use Grammarly to correct their grammar. One student said that he accessed Grammarly using a laptop, used Grammarly for no more than an hour a day, used Grammarly to check articles and assignments, and only used Grammarly to correct grammar.

> "I always open it using a laptop, because the correction details are in the web version. Then, usually it doesn't take up to an hour, unless there's a lot that needs to be corrected, it can take up to two hours. Apart from articles, other writing assignments are also usually corrected using Grammarly; the *Creative Writing* assignments was also corrected using Grammarly. Then, yes, I only use Grammarly for corrections."
> **(EFL Student 4)**

Above all the findings, the researchers found that Grammarly has complete features that are easy to use and help students write articles and learn grammar from the errors shown. To operate Grammarly does require a good internet connection. In addition, Pratama (2020) also stated that Grammarly requires a stable internet connection. Also, sometimes corrections from Grammarly change the meaning of writing or correct things that do not really need to be corrected. Moreover, the existing features will be more complete if the students use the paid version. The paid version provides more benefits by providing complete features, while the free version provides limited features (Fitria, 2021). However, with the free version, students can already correct their writing and reduce some of the errors, which is quite helpful in making their writing better. Despite its weaknesses, it can be seen that Grammarly is the choice of many students as a grammar correction application.

CONCLUSION

The current study investigated EFL students' perspectives and opinions on using Grammarly to check their grammar in writing articles. Besides, researchers also want to know how often they use Grammarly to help write. To begin with, this study has three major findings. **First**, these findings suggest that most EFL students have positive perspectives and opinions about using Grammarly as an online grammar checker, which was used to help them write articles since this software is easy to use. The results indicate that Grammarly as an English writing assistant has the potential to check their grammar, spelling, punctuation, and even the language style. Thus far, this study has provided a deeper insight into EFL students' views on using Grammarly, which had positive and negative sides. **Second**, the findings reported here shed new light on

Grammarly's correction which provide brief explanations of every error part, so the user can know why it's incorrect. Moreover, Grammarly's user interface is considered user-friendly, as well as the features are complete and still not complicated. Each error based on the feedback has reasons and suggested justification. Despite its positive views, Grammarly has some disadvantages for the users, and mainly the correction is not suitable for the context. Sometimes, the users might be frustrated since their errors are inappropriately connected to their writing context. **Third**, according to the study's findings, students only used Grammarly for up to an hour every day, and some respondents only used it to proofread articles or mini research. Overall, EFL students consider Grammarly has beneficial features that can help them write an article.

To better further studies, this study has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation, particularly using quantitative analysis with the same topic but with the large participants to provide more objective evidence. Thereby, the researchers hope that further findings can be conducted at any proficiency level, whether low or high level.

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