Appropriating Grammar as a Tool in Writing Activities: Student's Perception

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores the motivations and perspectives of 2 university students in Indonesia. In this research, author employed qualitative design with the research method "Interview Study". The author collects data using Semi-structured Interviews, meanwhile, the author uses Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke for data analysis. It was found that the use of Grammarly independently by the participants was motivated by feedback from the teacher, belief in learning, feedback preference and English proficiency. In addition, their abilities also shape their perspective on the features provided by Grammarly. Students' AWE appropriation is influenced by their belief about learning, preference on feedback and language proficiency.

Keywords: automated writing evaluation, EFL, grammarly, perspective

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INTRODUCTION

In learning English, we will learn many skills, such as writing, speaking, reading, listening, and vocabulary, and one of them is grammar (grammar). In general, grammar or grammar is a science that studies the rules that govern the use of language. In line with Yarrow (2007), who gave his opinion on Grammar, according to him, the word "Grammar" refers to all features of the structure or use of languages, such as spelling, punctuation, and pronunciation. It is often associated with the notion of truth. Not only Yarrow, Cushing & Helks (2021) also explain the meaning of Grammar; according to them, Grammar is associated with labelling grammatical constructions at the clause level, "accuracy" of usage in writing, and identifying "rules" in artificial examples. While Lindawati & Sengkey (2017) define Grammar as a collection of systems that language users must obey, they further explain that grammar is the basis for giving birth to a good and beautiful language and ensuring the stability of a language. Like other sciences, Grammar also has its function, namely arranging sentences into a complete and transparent arrangement. Lailika (2019) also explains the function of Grammar; according to him, Grammar can make us understand clearly the information contained in his writing. Grammar serves to separate grammatical forms of language from non-grammatical ones (Lindawati & Sengkey, 2017).

Based on the definitions and functions described previously, we understand that Grammar is essential to be taught and must be taught from an early age to children. However, behind the length of teaching Grammar that already exists in various schools, the results are arguably unsatisfactory. This statement is supported by Puspitasari (2013) research; he found that some students sometimes made grammatical mistakes, such as using "Article" in a sentence. In Puspitasari's research, some students did not add "Article" in a word that should be included in articles. In addition to Puspitasari's research, Noviabahari (2010) also researched Grammar errors made by students; in his research, many students made mistakes in using verbs. He found that students often did not change the verbal form even though the adverb of time changed; in addition, students also sometimes could not understand how to use the past tense correctly. Judging from the two researchers, it is not surprising that Grammar is complicated to learn and has always been a frightening spectre for students, even though they have studied it for a long time.

In today's instant-paced era, there are always technologies that help people in the various fields they live in. In education itself, many technologies or innovations make it easier for teachers in the teaching process and make it easier for students to do assignments; technology-based methods are a development of non-technology-based methods because they provide a more significant amount of feedback and present more individual material, making it easier for users to process learning (AbuSeileek, 2009). In language learning, one technology helps students master a language, namely Automatic Grammar Checker/Online Grammar Checker. Grammar checker tool is handy for students because it can facilitate Grammar correction by highlighting words and phrases in student writing that are suspiciously rare in English (Harvey-Scholes, 2018). Not only Harvey, Lawley (2015) also reported some of the conveniences obtained by using the Grammar checking tool; he said that students could quickly identify Grammar errors by looking at phrases that have been marked automatically by the tool. McAlexander (2000) argues that the program's feature is to mark style, grammar, or problems in the text by highlighting them and providing suggestions for any grammatical errors. The same thing was also conveyed by Cavaleri, M., & Dianati, (2016) that the Automatic Grammar Checker/Online Grammar Checker program provides feedback on grammatical writing errors/errors.

Until now, there are lots of Automatic Grammar Checker applications, and one of them is an application called Grammarly, Grammarly is one of the most popular Automatic Grammar Checker applications today, founded in 2009 by two Ukrainian developers, Maz Lytvyn and Alex Shevchenko. Several studies have been carried out related to Grammarly, and from these studies, Grammarly reaped some positive responses from researchers, Grammarly is an Automatic Grammar Checker application that provides very accurate feedback on grammatical errors (Cavaleri, M., & Dianati, 2016); moreover, research conducted by ONeill & Russell (2019) at an Australian university proves that Grammarly is the favourite application in terms of checking grammar mistakes. Grammarly has received positive statements from several experts who researched Grammarly because it provides various benefits to its users; as said by Qassemzadeh & Soleimani (2016) that Grammarly has main features such as: checking grammar and checking word pronouns, moreover, the Grammarly application can also perform other services such as proofreading and detection of plagiarism. Qassemzadeh & Soleimani (2016) also said that Grammarly has features

such as providing direct and indirect feedback; direct feedback is given using correction and explanation cards, while indirect feedback is given using underlined errors. This feature is handy for students because by providing detailed feedback, students can correct their own mistakes and better understand grammar rules (Nova, 2018). Furthermore, in this study, researchers will choose Grammarly as a tool to identify students' mistakes in their grammar because Grammarly is one of the most widely used Grammar checking tools by students.

In addition to checking the Grammar: Grammarly tool, the researcher will also pay attention to the students' perceptions who use this tool. All humans generally own perception, the benefit of perception itself is that an individual obtains meaning from an image that they can through the five senses. Speaking of benefits, we must also know the meaning and significance of the word "perception"; according to DeVito, (2011), perception is a process that makes us aware of the many stimuli that affect our senses. Moreover, May (2007) has another opinion about perception itself, he argues that perception is a series of human processes to know a sensation. Thoha (2008) also has his own opinion about perception; according to him, perception is essentially a cognitive process owned by every human being when understanding information about their environment by using the various senses that humans have. As Lailika (2019) said, students' perceptions are important because they are expected to improve and evaluate learning to make it more suitable for students; moreover, Lailika said that perception is influenced by many things, such as experience, abilities, and environment. On the other hand, Nugraha (2015) also explains the importance of perception; according to him, the perception will affect a person's attitude and affect the behaviour obtained by each individual as well as the choices made by every human being throughout life, it means that students' perceptions can determine the success or failure of the learning process; Nugraha also said that perception can occur when a person receives an external stimulus captured by the senses and then channelled into the brain. Thus, students' perception is also one of the things that researchers must consider whether the use of Grammarly brings benefits or even leads students to face difficulties or confusion. There are two types of perceptions possessed by humans, namely: Positive perception, where it's meaningful insight of sure things boosts the confidence and self strength of oneself in facing this world, bearing life's obstacles, and most importantly, focusing on the outer side of self. It also evolves the conviction of certain bonds and being kind to people, and Negative perception, the tendency to only lookup for their desires and the attempt to obtain and show off the worth within themselves (Burns, C., Brady, M., Dunn, A., Starr, N., Blosser, C., & Garzon, 2012).

Of the many AWE technologies spread on the internet, Grammarly is one of the most popular among students in Indonesia; this happens because it is easy to access. Several previous studies examined Grammarly; some of these studies stated that Grammarly's feedback helped them reduce the possibility of grammatical writing errors and improve the quality of their writing (Aidil, 2021; Yang, 2018). Meanwhile, in several studies, Grammarly has a significant role in improving student's writing skills; besides that, they also have a positive perception of Grammarly (Huang et al., 2020). For students, Grammarly is also straightforward to use and access; they feel that this application is very friendly for anyone new to Grammarly so that in operating it, there is no need to ask for help from others (Fahmi & Cahyono, 2021). Several studies also found that behind the ease of use and access of the Grammarly

application, some students also had negative perceptions of this application; they regretted some of the incorrect feedback provided by this application and also the stability of the internet network required (Lailika, 2019). Different from previous research, this study aims to fill the existing gap by investigating student perceptions of the use of Grammarly as a tool in writing activities.

METHOD

The author used a qualitative research approach and an Interview Study as a research design. By using this research approach and design, researchers can collect various empirical materials needed by the authors to compile this research and provides flexibility for participants to tell stories about their experiences (Creswell, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014).

This study focuses on several students to explore their experiences in using Grammarly. The participants of this study were 2 Indonesian students (male and female), Anugrah and Novianto. They are sixth-semester students from the faculty of teaching and education majoring in English education, and they have completed four writing classes (Paragraph Writing, Essay Writing I, Essay Writing II). They have also completed three Grammar classes (Basic, Intermediate, and Post-Intermediate English Structure). They are students from universities in Indonesia, and they are from the same class. Novianto used Grammarly only for one semester when he was in the second semester, while Anugrah used Grammarly only for one semester when he was in the third semester.

This study uses the interview method in collecting data. The author used semi-structured interviews to clarify information and follow up on the participants who were interviewed. Interviews were conducted using Indonesian, which is the mother tongue of the authors and participants. The data obtained were interpreted into English and analysed to find patterns by used thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006). By using thematic analysis, the data obtained were analyzed through six stages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As the previous chapter described the research methodology used in this study, this chapter, based on the data collection and analysis in chapter three, presents the findings and discussions from the data of the study. The data was obtained from the Semi-structure Interview. The findings are the result of the judgment made from the analysis. The findings and the discussion are as follows.

Anugrah

English grammar and writing classes helped me to hone my writing skills. I learned how to write essays correctly and adequately.

Anugrah learned about Grammarly from a friend when she was working on a group assignment. Her friend introduced a tool that could help her write, interested in it; she started trying to use the free version of Grammarly. Anugrah also admits that she has good knowledge of the organisation of academic writing and the structure of the English language.

I use this tool to help me improve the writing quality of my assignments, especially in terms of grammar. Sometimes my lecturers also like to give feedback, even though I have checked my assignments using Grammarly.

However, she only uses the Grammar Checker feature to minimise grammatical errors in writing activities. Although sometimes the lecturers like to give feedback on their writing, that does not eliminate their intention to use Grammarly. She also felt that the quality of his writing gradually improved as she used this tool.

I would not say I like the Plagiarism Checker and Tone Detector features, I think they both give poor results, and as long as I use those two features, I do not see any significant changes in my work.

In using Grammarly, Anugrah also rarely uses other features such as Plagiarism Checker and Tone Detector. According to her, the Plagiarism Checker feature likes to give results that she thinks are not good. In contrast, for the Tone Detector feature, she rarely uses it because there are no significant changes in her task when he uses the feature.

I no longer use Grammarly because it is pretty expensive for students like me. Besides, a stable signal as a condition for this tool to work optimally is also one reason I discontinued using Grammarly.

After using Grammarly for one semester during the third semester, Anugrah decided not to use Grammarly. According to her, Grammarly is a beneficial tool, but the cost and internet signal are why she stopped using this tool.

Novianto

Writing classes and grammar classes helped me in developing my writing skills. I was taught how to structure the grammar correctly and write a good essay.

Novianto admitted that he could find Grammarly when he was browsing a website. Besides that, his classmate also introduced this tool to him, so he was interested in trying the free features of Grammarly. Novianto also has good knowledge of academic writing and grammar.

I need good grades to graduate from my class; unfortunately the lecturers who teach me sometimes rarely give the feedback I need, so I am afraid that the assignments I give will have many mistakes. That is why I need this tool to get feedback, although the feedback given by this tool is not always correct.

He also said that he uses this tool because his lecturers rarely give him the feedback he needs. He also states that Grammarly can provide instant and straightforward feedback.

I think this tool is quite accurate. The Plagiarism and Grammar features are the most useful features because they provide much feedback. For the Tone Detector feature, I rarely use it because I do not understand this feature.

Novianto most often uses the Grammar Checker and Plagiarism Checker features as long as he uses this tool. The two features helped him correct his assignments and gave him much feedback to quickly revise his assignments. Meanwhile, the Tone Detector is a feature that he rarely uses.

I do not use Grammarly anymore. The high cost is the only reason why I decided not to use this tool anymore.

Unfortunately, the cost that must be paid to enjoy this tool is quite high. According to him, the cost is tough for him to pay, considering his position as a student who does not have a side job.

Grammarly introduces their products very carefully. They use advertisements placed in the two search tools most often used by the public, namely Google and Youtube. In addition, the concept of their advertisement, which shows a student who is using Grammarly to improve their writing, also makes people who see their ad more interested in using it, especially students. If we look at the results of the interviews above, we can conclude the importance of feedback from an instructor. Novianto stated that he rarely gets the feedback he needs, which causes him to use more than one feature, while Anugrah, who sometimes gets feedback, only uses one feature.

From the results of the interview, we can see that both participants appreciate the feedback. This result is also in line with previous research conducted in EFL countries where participants were motivated by feedback to study harder so that they appreciated the feedback (Kahraman & Yalvaç, 2015; Zhan, 2016). In addition, Ene & Kosobucki (2016) stated that students who take classes at educational institutions that do not require feedback are very appreciative of feedback or comments from their instructors. No single strategy is suitable for providing feedback to all students due to several factors, such as student performance or the type of error they made. Therefore, an EFL teacher must master academic writing skills and pay great attention to their students. In the case experienced by the participants, technology such as Grammarly is one solution given the feedback they do not always get. Besides the lack of Grammarly, which sometimes gives incorrect feedback, the participants seemed comfortable and satisfied with all the feedback that this tool provided. At first glance, the two participants have different goals in using Grammarly. However, they are motivated by the same perception of learning; they are motivated to improve the accuracy of their writing so that they get good grades and pass in the subjects they are undergoing. This is similar to a study conducted by Jiang & Yu (2020), where they found that students sought feedback using AWE to increase the accuracy of their writing.

Grammarly provides three feedback features, namely Grammar Checker, Tone Detector and Plagiarism Checker. The users of this tool, especially students in general, really appreciate the feedback provided by Grammarly, but their assessment of how this tool improves the quality of their essays is very diverse Pujiawati (2018). In this study, the participants had different perspectives on the features provided by Grammarly. Novianto and Anugrah have the same perspective on the Grammar Checker feature, and they have no doubts about this feature. Likewise, with the Tone Detector feature, they have the same perspective that this feature does not provide the feedback they need. As for the plagiarism checker feature, Novianto looks

comfortable using it, while Anugrah does not. Both claim that the considerable cost is the reason why they no longer use Grammarly.

CONCLUSIONS

This study describes the experiences of 2 Indonesian students in using the Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), namely Grammarly. The conclusions of this study are limited to the context of the participants of this study. The author found that the participants used Grammarly independently because they were motivated by feedback, which was one of the crucial things to improve their writing skills and the inconsistency of their instructors in providing feedback, which caused them to use Grammarly. Finally, it was their perspective on the costs that led them to discontinue the use of Grammarly.

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