Students' Perception on the Use of Grammarly in Thesis Writing

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to know students' perceptions of the use of Grammarly in thesis writing and their experiences in using it. The data were derived from Likert Scale questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was distributed to 40 English Education students to know about students' perceptions, which covered three aspects: perceived usefulness, perceived easiness, and students' satisfaction. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted with three chosen participants to learn about students' actual experiences in using Grammarly. The result showed the mean score for each aspect with the following distribution: perceived usefulness is 4.06, perceived ease is 3.92, and students' satisfaction is 4.01. These scores were verbally interpreted as 'agree', meaning that students perceived using Grammarly positively. These are supported by the interview results, in which students shared that they experienced benefits from using Grammarly in correcting punctuation, detecting mistyping, reconstructing sentences, and detecting grammar errors. However, the participants also stated that they noticed some weaknesses of this tool, which were related to inaccuracy of the feedback given. Eventually, this study revealed that in general, students agree that Grammarly is a helpful tool to help them with thesis writing, along with its advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, students' awareness is required to avoid errors that Grammarly might produce.

INTRODUCTION

English thesis writing is one of the most important component that need to be passed by all English students to pursue bachelor degree. It is categorized as academic writing, one of the most important genre in writing as it is "regarded as an inherent part of the English-learning process and applies to the study of any other subjects in which English is the international language" (Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022, p.438). However, it is more complicated as a writing genre since it requires students' conscious effort, critical thinking, and high-quality writing skills (Lin & Morrison, 2021).

Just like any other genre of English writing, Indonesian writers tend to face difficulties related to influence from the native language and a lack of awareness regarding writing necessities (Rezeki & Rahmani, 2021). A study by (Novita, 2012) stated that the challenges of English thesis writing come from two significant factors namely cultural and aspects of writing. Cultural factors are related to students' inability to think critically, produce linear ideas, and apply originality in

writing. While aspects of writing mainly refer to six important aspects such as writing content, organization, discourse, vocabulary, syntax, and mechanics (Brown, 2001).

Fortunately, in this digital age, as the development of technology, the number of advance learning devices also rises. It is called AI, part of current technology development that is widely used by students to improve their performance in class. For students, as the learning stakeholder, AI technology offer promising assistance to support and enhance their skills. Even now it can be said that the use of AI in language classes is particularly unseparated (Sumakul et al., 2021). Through this Ai technology Through this AI technology advancement, one of the skills that can be assisted is writing skill, the chances to use this technology to improve writing skill is widely opened.

AI's benefits (specifically in writing) vary from translating, correcting spelling, analyzing text, summarizing and rewriting, checking, plagiarism, and many more (Burkhard, 2022). The use of AI in language learning also promote self-learning (Sumakul et al., 2021), which enables students to access it anytime without the restriction of time and space.

Grammarly is one of the most well-known AI writing tool used by many students these days. Launched in 2009, Grammarly offers numerous features that can help students detect grammatical and punctuation errors, mistyping, incorrect diction, and improper language style and many more (Ghufron, 2019; Setyani et al., 2023). This writing assistance application could help students reduce the number of errors in their writing.

Nevertheless, just like any other AI application, Grammarly comes with its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that Grammarly provided direct and indirect feedbacks (Cavaleri & Dianati, 2016). Direct feedback is given when by displaying the errors along with the reason why it was detected as an error, while indirect feedback is given by underlining errors with red lines. The students might find this feature helpful since it does not only show the errors but it also provides the option on how to revise the errors (Nova, 2018) so that the students could gain a better understanding and avoid making the same errors in the future. Moreover, it is also claimed to be very fast and user-friendly writing (Fitria et al., 2022; Setyani et al., 2023)that takes much time to detect errors.

However, as an AI application, Grammarly also has its downsides. Like any other AI application with a big chance of producing errors and inconsistencies (Burkhard, 2022), so does Grammarly. Many students agree that there are times when Grammarly give misleading feedbacks (Nova, 2018) some even experienced that Grammarly sometimes changes the 'intention' of their sentences that makes them out of context (Zinkevich & Ledeneva, 2021). Therefore, in using Grammarly in the writing process there are things that need to be taken into consideration to avoid these things to happen.

Apart from its positive and negative effects, it cannot be neglected that the use of Grammarly in writing is becoming more common, and more students are using Grammarly to improve their knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is essential to examine important aspects that might affect students' use of Grammarly, whether in positive or negative ways.

One important aspect to be considered is how students perceive the use of Grammarly itself. Sumakul et al. (2021) state that students' positive perception go in line with students' improvement in language performance. In correlation with this study, it means that the use of Grammarly may resulted well if the students have positive perception toward it. It is supported by the fact that for students, having a positive perception tends to give them a clear idea of why they should participate and what benefits they can get form certain activities (Lamatokan, 2018). Considering that every student has their own way of learning, knowing what, when, and why they learn something is beneficial. Therefore, students' perception of the use of Grammarly as part of integration of technology matters.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have been conducted investigating this issue, for example from Fitria et al. (2022) and Setyani et al. (2023) . The study by Fitria et al. (2022) focuses on Students' perception of the features of Grammarly. Investigating four main factors: language style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation, the result showed that students perceived Grammarly positively, especially to help them improve their Grammar. This was proved by the result of the questionnaire which grammar got 90%, punctuation 87%, spelling 85%, and language style 84%. These percentages were categorized as strongly agree, which means students perceive in in positive perception. The later study by Setyani et al. (2023)focused on investigating engagement and influence factors of Grammarly in thesis writing. It reported that students showed complex and diverse engagement in terms of behavioral (revision, strategies, and time spent), cognitive (understanding the feedback), and affective (emotional and attitide). Furthermore, it implied that Grammarly has positively influenced by indicators of behavioral flexibility, cognitive efforts, emotional stability, motivation, and self-esteem.

Working in the same issue, this study focused on investigating students' perception of Grammarly from the perspective of usefulness, easiness, and satisfaction, as well as students' experience in using Grammarly. the theory of technology acceptance model (TAM) from Davis (1989) is used. This theory is used since Grammarly itself is product of technology development. It is a valid and reliable measurement that has been employed in many research that is into information of technology acceptance (Cavaleri & Dianati, 2016). This theory is grounded by two main factors, namely perceived usefulness and perceive easiness (Davis, 1989). Usefulness refers to whether the use of technology can help students meet their goals and enhance the learning process, while easiness refers how much effort students need to use the technology.

However, Cavaleri & Dianati (2016) have stated that in its development, the TAM model received criticism due to it limitation and simplicity. Therefore, in its development, some additional variables, such as students' attitude, intentional behavior, and satisfaction, are added. However, to take these three additional variables would make the scope of the study very broad. Therefore, in investigating students' perception, this study would only focus on the factors of easiness, usefulness, and satisfaction. To sum up, this study investigates students' perception and students' experiences in using Grammarly.

METHOD

This study was conducted using descriptive research method as it is meant to "describe the existing phenomena as accurately as possible" (Atmowardoyo, 2018), which in this case, the 'phenomenon' referred to the trend among students to use Grammarly in supporting their thesis writing. The data were collected by two different sources, survey and interview. The survey was done by distributing closed-ended questionnaire to 40 students of English education department to get information about students' perceptions (related to usefulness, easiness, and satisfaction factors) of using Grammarly. In designing the questionnaire, the researcher used Likert Scale by Best and Kahn (2006) as guidance. It consists of 5 ranges that can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. Likert Scale

Positive Statement		Negative Statement	
The Option	Score	The Option	Score
Strongly Agree (SA)	5	Strongly Agree (SA)	1
Agree (A)	4	Agree (A)	2
Neutral (N)	3	Neutral (N)	3
Disagree (D)	2	Disagree (D)	4
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	Strongly Disagree (SD)	5

The data was analyzed quantitatively by calculating the mean score and standard deviation. Then, after getting the mean score, it is verbally interpreted based on Bringula Interval by Bringula et al. (2012).

Scale	Mean Score Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly agree
4	3.51-4.50	Agree
3	2.51-3.50	Neutral
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree

To support the contextual interpretation, a further interview was conducted with 3 chosen participants to gather information about students' experiences using Grammarly. The data was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis by Creswell (2012). This was used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes to describe both implicit and explicit meaning within a dataset (Guest et al., 2012). In doing this analysis, there were six steps; familiarizing, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Students' Perception on The Use of Grammarly in Thesis Writing.

In presenting students' perception on the use of Grammarly, the researcher presented the result of the questionnaire in form of tables. These tables represented three factors that could help to determine students' perception such as perceive of usefulness, perceive of easiness, and students; satisfaction in Grammarly.

These tables showed the mean score, standard deviation, as well as verbal interpretation for each question/item that could help the researcher determine students' perception toward the use of Grammarly in thesis writing.

Table 3. Mean Score of Perceive of Usefulness

Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Thesis writing would be more difficult to perform without the AI-based writing tool Grammarly	4,03	0,80	Agree
Using the AI-based writing tool Grammarly improves my writing performance	4,15	0,62	Agree
Grammarly supports critical aspects of thesis writing	4,00	0,60	Agree
Grammarly helps me improve my grammar in thesis writing	4,15	0,53	Agree
Grammarly helps me improve the coherence of my thesis writing	3,98	0,70	Agree
Grammarly helps me improve the cohesion of my thesis writing	4,00	0,68	Agree
Using Grammarly allows me to accomplish more writing task than would otherwise be possible	4,00	0,55	Agree
Using AI-based writing tool Grammarly enable me to accomplishes task more quickly	4,10	0,60	Agree
Overall I think using AI-based writing tool Grammarly improves the quality of my thesis writing	4,13	0,56	Agree
Mean	4,06	0,63	Agree

As table 3 shows, after calculating the mean score and standard deviation for 9 items in usefulness factor, resulted that the mean score for the usefulness factor is 4.06, which is interpreted ad 'agree' based on the Bringula Interval. With the number of standard deviation is 0,63 means that this result is valid. This indicates that students agree that using Grammarly in thesis writing is useful.

Table 4. The Mean Score of Perceive of Easiness

Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Grammarly provides helpful guidance in performing task	4,03	0,66	Agree
I find it easy to get Grammarly to do what I want to do	3,98	0,53	Agree
I find it easy to recover from errors encounter while using AI-based writing tool Grammarly	4,28	0,60	Agree
I make error frequently when using Grammarly	3,25	0,81	Neutral
I often become confuse when I use Grammarly	3,58	0,84	Agree
I think the features in Grammarly is user-friendly	4,08	0,57	Agree
It is easy for me to remember how to perform task using AI-based writing tool Grammarly	3,93	0,65	Agree
Overall, I find Grammarly is easy to use	4,28	0,60	Agree
Mean	3,92	0,66	Agree

For the easiness factor, it received a mean score of 3.92 which also interpreted as 'agree'. However, from the items presented, it can be seen that half of them received a score below 4. These items are mainly related to error (see appendix 2). In conclusion, it implies that in general Grammarly is relatively easy to use, but some errors may cause uncomfortably.

Table 5. The Mean Score of Students' Satisfaction with Grammarly

Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Using the AI-based writing tool Grammarly helps me meet my personal goal	3,85	0.58	Agree
AI-based writing tool Grammarly improve my motivation to write my thesis	3,63	0.77	Agree
In my opinion, AI-based writing tool Grammarly offers more advantages than disadvantage in the process of thesis writing	4,23	0.53	Agree
Grammarly offers beneficial feedback	4,13	0.52	Agree
Overall, I satisfied using AI writing tool Grammarly	4,20	0.80	Agree
Mean	4,01	0,64	Agree

Similar to students' perception of usefulness and easiness, students also showed positive responses toward Grammarly in form satisfaction. This was proven by the questionnaire's mean

score of 4.01 which also interpreted as agree.

After seeing the mean scores and standard deviations for each factors, it can be concluded that students showed positive responses toward the use of Grammarly in thesis writing. The mean score of each factor are relatively stable in 'agree interpretation'. The standard deviations are also under 1, which mean that the result of these questionnaire is valid. Therefore, from the data presented, it is safe to say that the result of the questionnaire suggest that students show a positive perception toward the use of Grammarly.

Students' Experiences in Using Grammarly

After determining students' perception toward the use of Grammarly, the researcher also found it important to analyze students' experiences in using Grammarly. After the interview, it was found that students experienced several conveniences and inconveniences of Grammarly.

The Conveniences of Using Grammarly

The first noticeable thing is related to easiness and usefulness. The participants agreed that as one of most well-known writing tool, Grammarly is relatively easy to operate.

> "…Because it is easy to use since that is the tool that I am familiar with" (P3)

Moreover, by using Grammalry participants agreed that it helped them to improve their grammar in terms of tense(s), preposition, conjunction, and subject-verb agreement.

> "…for me myself since I wrote the sentene all by myself, I usually use Grammarly to get correction in term of tenses, the use of punctuation, preposition and conjunction in paragraph" (participant 3).
> "So by using Grammarly it helps us to detect whether the subject verb agreement in our sentences was correct or not, and if there is any mistakes, which part requires correction. By using Grammarly, for me it is easier to detect the potential mistakes because they are automatically displayed in Grammarly" (participant 1)

Besides, from Grammar side, the participants also stated that the use of Grammarly is also useful in term of mechanics, for example, it helped them to apply proper punctuation, detect mistyping, and provided better vocabularies (word choice).

> "…it also helps us correcting the punctuation like coma, full stop, colon, and so on that is important in thesis writing. Because you know, sometimes we miss it." (participant 1)
> "Sometimes, when we write by ourselves without help from certain application, there are chances to make use the same words many times, *nah* with Grammarly assistance we can avoid that. Besides, it is also helpful to avoid the unnecessary words, so it is really helpful to make the sentences simple, understandable, and organized." (participant 2)

These statements are in line with the results of questionnaire where students agreed that Grammarly is useful and easy to use. By saying these, students confirm and strengthen the result of the questionnaire.

The second convenience is related to the price of the premium version. The participants agreed that Grammarly was relatively affordable if they want to purchase the premium one. As stated by participant 1 and 2, they felt that the price of purchasing Grammarly premium did not burden them financially:

> "Grammarly Premium is affordable enough to be purchased" (P2)
> "The first is that using Grammarly Premium is not too pricey" (P1)

Talking about the price of the premium version might be considered as an important matter since it would affect the 'service' that would be provided by the Grammarly. Affordable price meant that students are likely be able to purchase the premium version, which meant significant advantages service.

As the users of Grammarly premium, all the participants agreed that purchasing the premium version got them more advantages that was helpful for their thesis such as the advance of the features, language style option, and more complete suggestions. Students claimed that one of the most significant things is that in premium version they got more complete features (that was not available in the free version) that provided more suggestion as well. The four features were correctness, clarity, engagement and delivery which did not available in the free version.

> "…the features are complete. Starting from correctness checker, plagiarism checker, and so on" (P2)
> "….it has plagiarism checker, which does not available in free version. Secondly, it emphasized four main features such as correctness, clarity, engagement, and delivery. So we can get more varied and rich suggestion compared to when we use the free one." (P1)

Moreover, the participant claimed that by purchasing the premium version they can adjust the language style into academic style.

> "And for the language style,….there is an option that you can choose….what kind of language style you want to apply in your writing, for example you can choose language style for academic or for business. When you choose certain option, the vocabulary will adjust based on your choice. For me, I usually choose these academic one" (P3)

Being given these statements, it can be said that even though the Grammarly itself in standard version is already helpful, but upgrading to the premium version would give them more advances features that would give the more advantages. Affordable price means that the students are likely to get access to the better version without big restriction of financial burden.

The Inconveniences of Using Grammarly
From the previous findings, we can see that Grammarly provide useful and helpful assistance or the students in their thesis writing. However, students also experienced the inconvenience of Grammarly such as the need to check and re-check due to inaccuracy of the feedback. This also lead students to be more careful and not always follow the suggestions if the feel like the suggestions are not suitable.

> "…well because it is only AI, so sometimes the suggestions are still incorrect. So still need to do a check and re-check carefully" (participant 3)
> "…maybe for people who do not really understand, they will just constantly click ok. But for me, I do not do it. I really pay attention to the sentences, whether or not they need to be revised. If I feel like the suggestion is not necessary, then I will not follow it. Because not all suggestion from Grammarly are applicable, sometimes we need to know the context as well" (participant)

As a writing assistance tool, the participants agreed that Grammarly has its conveniences and inconveniences, therefore, students' awareness on how to use this tool properly is important.

CONCLUSIONS

This study had presented significant findings related to how Grammarly was perceived by the students in relation with their thesis writing. It reported such aspects of usefulness, easiness, and students' satisfaction with the feedback provided by Grammarly. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in general, the students showed positive perception toward the use of Grammarly. They considered Grammarly useful, easy to use, and quite satisfied their writing needs.

In easiness factor, students showed familiarity with this AI writing tool, Grammarly. The strength of Grammarly is that it provides user friendly-features. In usefulness factor, students stated that by using Grammarly, it helps them to detect mistakes such as mistyping and improper punctuation. It is also helpful to improve their grammar especially in applying tense(s), preposition, conjunction, and subject-verb agreement appropriately. Moreover, students also indicate that they are satisfied enough with the use of Grammarly. It helps them meet their personal goal in writing. It also improves their motivation in writing. For the students, Grammarly offers beneficial feedbacks that is useful to better their thesis.

However, even though students agree that Grammarly is useful for them, they also noticed some weaknesses of this application. The weaknesses were mainly related to internal service such as irrelevant, less accurate, and out of context feedbacks. Therefore, in order to make sure that the feedbacks is still in the right corridor, the awareness of the students are required.

In using Grammarly as AI writing assistance, the students did not always follow the suggestion. As in Grammarly it would display the errors along with suggestions on how to fix it, students could decide whether they would revise it as suggested or not. It meant that even though they used an AI writing tool assistance, at the end, the choice to use the suggestion or on rely on the students.

Eventually, this research suggested that students grow awareness that Grammarly is only a supporting tool to help them in the process of writing. Students should not fully rely on it without doing proofreading, checking, and rechecking. Therefore, its use can be applied without neglecting the need to improve English language skills/knowledge. Especially the factors that were related to writing (especially thesis writing as an academic writing).

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