

Research article

Grammarly as a Tool to Enhance Students' Self-Directed Learning

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Abstract.

The goal of this study was to examine whether Grammarly can help students improve their self-directed learning in L2 writing. Qualitative research methods were used. Data were collected from 20 students in the third semester of the English Education Study Program at IAIN Kendari using questionnaires, reflections, and interviews. According to the findings, Grammarly aided students' self-directed learning by educating them on the benefits of using Grammarly to improve their writing quality and encouraging them to self-evaluate their progress. Based on the results, lecturers and prospective teachers should use a helpful technology like Grammarly to help students improve their writing.

Keywords: Grammarly, self-directed learning, L2 writing

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1. Introduction

Technology has developed rapidly in many aspects and brings a lot of changes in human life [1]. These days, people are faced with all of the things that require skill in operating the technology as well as in teaching and learning activities. As a result, many online correction tools exist to help students in improving their writing [2], one of them is Grammarly. Grammarly is one of the online grammar checkers that can help students or academics in their writing by checking the spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors and providing comprehensive and useful feedback [3]; [2]; [4]; [5]

The researcher has discovered several kinds of research that regard the use of Grammarly in improving student's writing [6]; [3]; [2]; [7]; [1]; [5]. Furthermore, the other study is focusing on writing correction tools [8]; [9] or another online grammar checker like Ginger, Ms. Word, and many more [3]. As a grammar checker, it can help students in their writing by checking the spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors and providing comprehensive and useful feedback [3]; [2]; [5]. Grammarly also can check the subject-verb agreement, article usage, modifier placement, preposition use, and quantifiers [3]. Besides, Grammarly also can help the lecturer/adviser's time in giving feedback for the students' writing because they only have to check the cohesiveness and coherence of the students' writing [6].


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In the Indonesian setting, some researchers have investigated the use of Grammarly by comparing between the students who write with the help of Grammarly and with the help from teacher feedback [2]; how Grammarly can improve students' writing quality [7]; also what are the strengths and weakness of Grammarly as an online correction tool [5]. While for the international context there is research from Daniels and Leslie [3] who explores to what extent Grammarly helps students in the writing process; and also Cavaleri and Dianati [6] that study students' perception toward Grammarly.

Most of the studies only focus on improving students writing but less has been done to explore the effect of Grammarly on students' self-directed learning. Even though the students already know the benefit of using the online grammar checker [4], they tend to use it only when the lecturer asks them to use it. Whereas writing in an online environment can improve people's writing, encourage people self-directed learning [10], and make people responsible for their own learning [1]. The development of self-directed learning has become one of the skills that is much emphasized in recent studies to be able to create meaningful learning experiences [11]. Silen and Uhlin [12] also show that the concept of self-directed learning creates a lot of important factors related to students' responsibility and independent learning. It is argued that the technology learning environment can provide students with great opportunities and abilities to be self-directed in their learning because it guarantees the students to be not only knowledgeable about the proper resource selection, but also the management and appropriate usage of the information [11]. Therefore, this study will focus on the use of Grammarly in enhancing students' self-directed learning in L2 writing at the English Language Education Study Program in IAIN Kendari. It is conducted to see whether the student's self-directed learning would increase or not with the help of Grammarly which will be beneficial for improving their L2 writing.

2. Research Method

This study engaged with qualitative study design used a case study approach. The participants were 20 students of the English Education Study Program in the third semester in IAIN Kendari. The data was collected through an online platform, Google form, where the students were requested to fill reflections about using an online grammar checker, Grammarly. The gathered data were analyzed using the technique of analyzing data by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana [13]. In data condensation, the researcher decided which data chunks to code and which to pull out, after that, data then summarized, highlighted, and created into groups and partition (categorized), and also

took note for several important answers (coded) to obtain several similar perceptions from the students.

3. Finding

Students' awareness of the advantage of using Grammarly

From the reflection distributed to 20 students of the English Education Department, it was revealed that 30% or six students said that they only used Grammarly for a certain subject, that was Writing subject and all of them said it was because they were requested or asked by the teacher to use Grammarly in finishing their task, as the students 16 (S16) said: *"We use Grammarly because that course obliges us to use it in writing"*. Majority of the students (70% or 14 students) said that they did not only used Grammarly on a certain subject but they also used it on several different subjects that required them to write. The reason why they used Grammarly in other subjects that require them to write was because it helped them to complete their assignments, correct their writing, and improve their knowledge. As the S1 stated that:

"I have used Grammarly several times to check another writing assignment so that my writing becomes better and avoided by small grammar errors." (S1)

"I use Grammarly in all courses because it can increase my knowledge of using Grammarly." (S19)

Figure 1 showed that students were aware of the advantages of applying Grammarly feedback in their writing. Therefore, they used Grammarly feedback in the other courses that require them to write. There were several kinds of subjects where the students usually use Grammarly in correcting the writing that is on the Writing, Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Grammar course, or any subject that requires them to write.

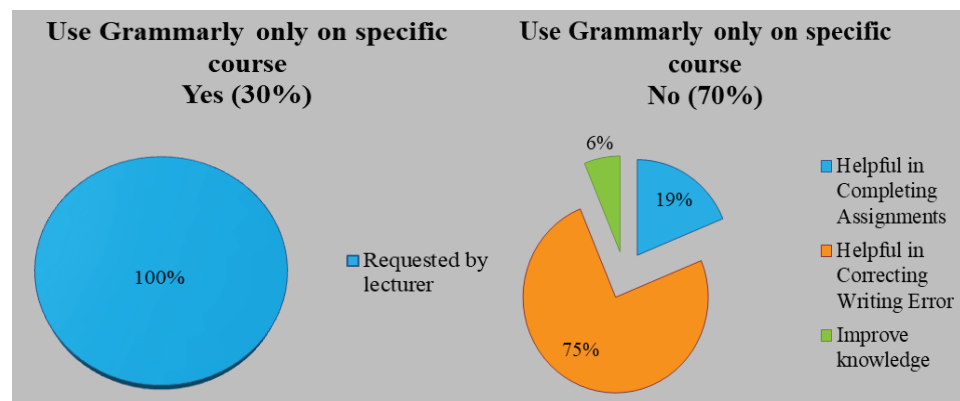


Figure 1: The Use Grammarly in certain course.

Students' self-evaluation in writing

The finding showed that among 20 students there was only one student who said that she rarely proofread her writing because if she did it and discovered another mistake she would revise it continuously and certainly it would take time again. The other 19 students said they checked their writing again to see their improvement in writing (39%) or either to discover another mistake in their writing (61%). As the S3 said:

"[I checked my writing before submitting it] Yes, because we will know to what extent the development of the quantity and quality of our writing, which must be improved and developed in further writing." (S3)

"[I checked my writing before submitting it] Yes. Because I want to know what are the mistakes and weaknesses in my writing." (S14)

From the percentage in Figure 2, it indicated that most of the students proofread their writing because they wanted to discover another mistake that might be ignored by Grammarly since they wanted to make their writing perfect. As S7 stated that he proofread his writing because he did not want to repeat the same mistakes in his writing.

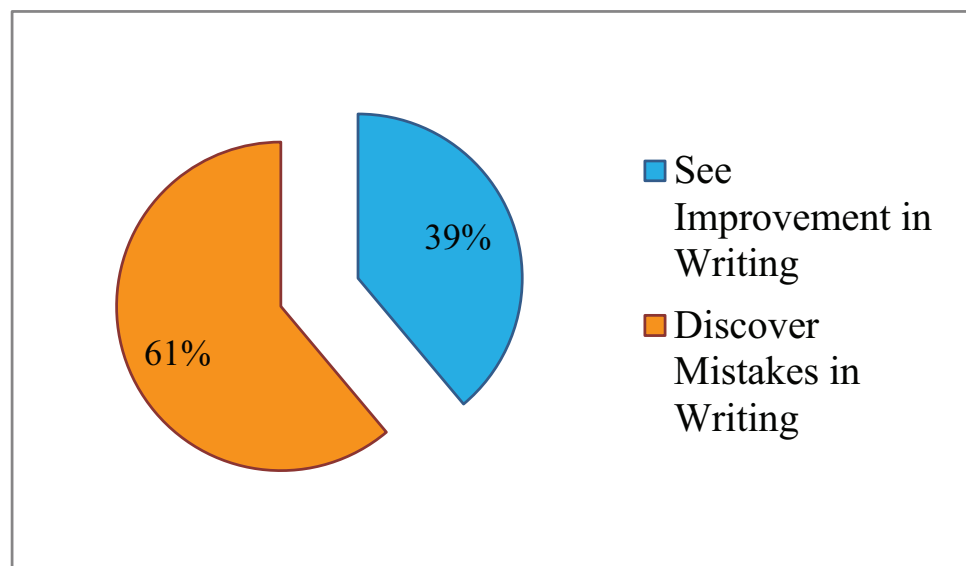


Figure 2: Grammarly as a medium for proofreading.

Students' improvement in writing

Based on the students' reflection, all 20 students stated that their writing became better after using Grammarly and they gave several different statements about the improved aspect in their writing and it could be seen in Figure ???. The majority of the student said their Grammar have improved better and a total was 27% of students seemed to have this same idea. The second most aspect that seemed to be improved

was the Organization of words or sentences in writing. The next aspect was punctuation and 13% of students approved this improvement. Another aspect that had improved in students' writing was diction and tenses. Also, there were a 7% number of students for each aspect who said that they felt the improvement of their writing in terms of conjunction and vocabulary. For the aspect of spelling, 6% of students stated about it and the last one with the lowest number of students that were only 3% or just one person said that she/he has an improvement in terms of accuracy. Here, the statements from the participant:

"[Feel the improvement]...In terms of grammar and spelling, but after comparing my writing in semester 2, there were more errors compared to semester 3. [Grammar and spelling]" (S3)

"When I write, these are kind of error exist in my writing; inaccurate punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary selection. Sometimes, I place vocabulary that is not proper with the text. [Punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary.]"(S13)

"[Feel the improvement] In terms of making sentences, therefore, now I think I write a paragraph in a more good and clear sentence. [Organization of sentence]"(S20)

"...besides, Grammarly application also corrected the tenses that I use.[Tenses]" (S10)

"Now I become more careful with my writing and can complete my tasks quickly. [Accuracy]" (S12)

"Now I can make a good and structured paragraph due to my understanding of conjunction and related material. [Conjunction]" (S18)

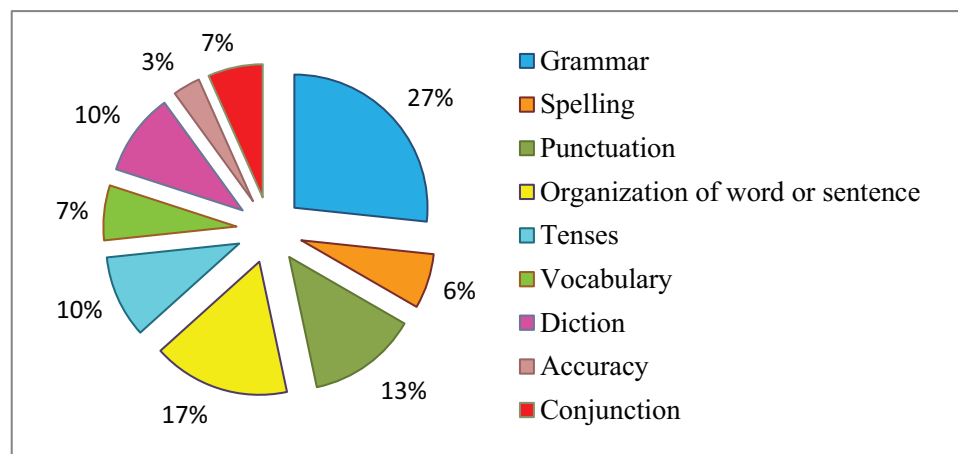


Figure 3: Improved aspects in writing after using Grammarly.

All the students felt they had an improvement in their writing in terms of grammatical structure. They aware that there were some parts of their grammatical understanding

had improved after being exposed to the use of Grammarly which made their writing better.

4. Discussion

The finding showed that Grammarly enhances students' self-directed learning in L2 writing by making them aware that Grammarly helped their writing process. It was shown in the finding of the study that out of 20 students most of them used Grammarly in other courses that obliged them to write since they knew it could correct their writing and developed their writing quality. Williamson [14] and Manning [15] said that one of the aspects of self-directed learning was awareness. Here, the awareness was marked by students' initiative or motivation to learn as they experienced needs and interests on something [15]. Motivation is a precious value in life that can make people become productive with their life or not [16]. The motivation comes from their awareness to apply Grammarly's advantages to their writing. This motivation then moves people to act, think, and develop [16]. In this case, students' motivation then makes them use Grammarly to help them in writing. This movement makes the students identified as a self-directed learner since the willingness come from their self or their motivation. As added by Laubscher and Bosch [17] collaboration in the online environment can spread student motivation. It also can improve people's writing, encourage people self-directed learning [10], and make people responsible for their learning [1].

They knew that Grammarly could help them in improving their writing; hence, they used it in every course that required them to write. When they used Grammarly to check their writing, students learn using the technology that can help them to be autonomous learners or being self-directed learners. Grammarly can be used everywhere and anywhere as long as the students were connected with the internet network. Using technology as a facility in learning might foster students' self-directed learning because they were more likely to contribute and participate in the learning process actively [11]; [18]. It includes students' action in making a plan and also decided the source or their learning process. Ghufroon and Rosyida [2] also stated that learn using Grammarly encouraged the students to be autonomous learners as it required the students to evaluate their works with the help of feedback given by the system.

The second, made the students proofread their writing. Even though they used the online grammar checker [4] to check their writing, they did the self-revision again before submitting their writing to see whether there were still any errors in their writing or to see their quality or improvement in their writing after using the help from Grammarly.

Grammarly is an easy tool that can help students with their writing by checking the spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors and providing comprehensive and useful feedback [3]; [2]; [4]; [5]. Despite knowing the advantages of Grammarly, the students still wanted to proofread their writing before submitting it because as S3 said in the reflection, that he checked his writing to see the quality or quantity of his writing so that he would know what aspect that should be improved and developed in his further writing. As the students implied, they proofread their writing because they wanted to see their progress or mistake; which was one of the aspects to be a self-directed learner. This finding supported by Manning [15], conveyed that successful self-directed learners monitored and evaluated their progress; and assessed the quality of their work [14]. Self-evaluation or the ability to evaluate one's own progress is also one of the characteristics of a self-directed learner [19].

Overall, all grounded findings in this study lead to one goal, which is to improve students' writing skills in the scope of second language writing. From students' reflection, it showed that by using help from Grammarly, students seemed to have improved their writing in several different aspects of writing. Such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, organization of word and sentence, tenses, vocabulary, diction, accuracy, and conjunction. It was seen on the statement from S20 who said: "*[I Feel the improvement] In terms of making sentences, therefore, now I think I write a paragraph in a more good and clear sentence.*" As Qassemzadeh & Soleimani [1] pointed out the feedback given by Grammarly gave a positive impact that made the students easily recognized their mistakes and improved their writing.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of the study was drawn by the finding and discussion from gathered data. The finding shows there are two obtained ways to enhance students' self-directed learning by applying feedback from Grammarly. The first was it helps students to be self-directed learners by making them aware of the advantage of using Grammarly in their writing which can motivate them to use it in correcting and make their writing better. The other one is it makes them do the self-revision or self-evaluation despite using help from Grammarly since they realize there might be a little error in their writing or they just want to see the improvement in their writing after corrected by Grammarly. Overall, the students seem to have an improvement in their writing after continuously getting feedback from Grammarly. The improvement is in the field of grammatical and sentence structure which is marked by the consciousness and readiness of their writing.

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