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Exploring Students' Perceptions of Using Grammarly in Academic Writing: Master Students of the English Department as a Case Study

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Abstract:

Mastering the writing skill can be a challenging task, particularly for MA students who are required to submit highquality written assignments. To ensure that their work is flawless, the use of online error-checking tools like Grammarly can prove to be crucial. In this respect, this study aims to investigate the perceptions of MA students enrolled in the English Department at Ibn Tofail University regarding the use of Grammarly and its impact on their academic writing quality. A total of 60 MA students were selected using a convenience sampling technique. A mixedmethod approach was employed to explore the specific ways in which students utilize the tool, the perceived benefits of its usage, and any challenges or limitations encountered by MA students. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire based on the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). This includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (SPSS), while thematic analysis was employed for qualitative responses. The findings reveal that MA students perceive Grammarly as a useful and easy-to-use online tool reporting their different experiences and objectives in using online error-checking tools.

Keywords: Academic writing, Grammarly, master students, perceptions, technology acceptance model

1. Introduction

The era of globalization has brought forth significant technological advancements that have permeated various aspects of modern life, including education. The use of online platforms and applications has become an integral part of the daily routines of people worldwide. In the field of education, technology has become a dynamic tool that is revolutionizing teaching and learning methodologies, offering unprecedented opportunities for skill enhancement and optimizing learning experiences (Bahanshal, 2021). One of the most notable innovations in education is the advent of online grammar checkers, aiming to refine students' writing abilities and eliminate errors (Perdana & Frida, 2019).

Writing effectively requires mastery of various components, such as proper punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar. This ensures that readers receive a clear and precise message. In this vein, grammar checking and editing have become an essential aspect of the writing process (Perdana & Frida, 2019). Respectively, research conducted by Kaushik, Eika and Sandnes (2020) highlights the potential of online writing tools to improve writing quality and address issues related to readability.

Furthermore, adherence to grammatical conventions is crucial for academic success, as emphasized by Caveleri and Dianati (2016). Equally important for effective communication is writing fluency, which is characterized by coherent organization and ease of comprehension (Atasoy & Temizkan, 2016). However, achieving accuracy and fluency in academic writing can be difficult for university students as they need feedback to improve their academic efforts (Caveleri & Dianati, 2016; Perdana & Frida, 2019). In this respect, online checker tools can be beneficial for students as they provide feedback on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and contextual errors, which can help them improve their writing skills

(Perdana & Frida, 2019). By using technology in this way, educators can improve their writing instruction and help students become better writers in both academic and professional settings.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are set forth to explore the perceptions of MA students at the English Department of Ibn Tofail University regarding the adoption and use of Grammarly as an online checker for error correction in writing. It is, therefore, intended to:

- Identify the specific ways in which MA students at Ibn Tofail University utilize Grammarly to improve the quality of their written work.
- Examine the perceived benefits of using Grammarly in the writing process in terms of its usefulness and ease of use.
- Investigate the limitations and challenges that MA students encounter while using Grammarly.

1.2. Research Questions

Aligned with the aforementioned objectives, the questions that this study is based upon are:

- Q1: What are the perceptions of MA students at the English Department of Ibn Tofail University regarding the adoption of Grammarly as an online checker for error correction in writing?
- Q2: To what extent do MA students at Ibn Tofail University utilize Grammarly to improve the quality of their written work?
- Q3: What are the perceived benefits of using Grammarly in the writing process, as reported by MA students?
- Q4: What are the challenges MA students encounter while using Grammarly?

2. Review of the Literature

The role of technology in education has witnessed a paradigm shift, exerting profound implications not only on pedagogical practices but also on the fundamental constructs of learning. Among the notable advancements in educational technology, online grammar checkers have emerged as pivotal tools, particularly in the realm of writing enhancement within academic contexts.

Considered a hallmark of technological innovation, Grammarly exemplifies the capabilities of online grammar checkers, facilitating error detection and correction with remarkable precision and efficiency (Jesica Aime Siahaan et al., 2024, p. 21; Lipalam et al., 2023, p. 153; Perdana & Farida, 2019, p. 68). Its utility transcends mere spell-checking, encompassing sophisticated features, such as contextual error identification and plagiarism detection, thereby improving the quality and integrity of written discourse.

The transformative impact of online grammar checkers extends beyond individual writing proficiency to encompass broader educational dynamics. These tools serve as catalysts for pedagogical innovation, fostering collaboration and communication among educators and learners (Japos, 2013, p.104; Nova, 2018; Tambunan et al., 2022, p.18). By facilitating the editing and revising processes, Grammarly and similar platforms empower users to refine their writing skills, thereby contributing to enhanced academic achievement and scholarly discourse.

In 2009, Grammarly was founded by Max Lytvyn, Alex Shevchenko, and Dmytro Lider to help students and individuals enhance their spelling and grammar skills. As an AI-powered writing assistant, Grammarly has grown to provide a complete suite of language and communication tools. Its vast array of offerings has significantly contributed to the improvement of online grammar assistance for users. While Grammarly initially existed solely as an online web editor, it has since diversified to include a Microsoft add-in, desktop software, and mobile apps, as noted by Mubarok and Syafi'i (2020).

In exploring the utilization of online grammatical error checks by English learners and their impact on the enhancement of L2 writing, studies by Anditasari & Sitompul (2022), Bahanshal (2021), Vo & Nguyen (2020) have uncovered valuable insights into the dynamics between language learners and online writing tools. Bahanshal's (2021) quantitative study, focusing on preparatory year Saudi English students, reveals that despite the availability of other online grammar-checking tools, Grammarly emerged as the most preferred choice among participants, indicating its prominence in the landscape of the L2 writing support tools. This, in turn, resonates with the findings of Vo & Nguyen (2020), who observed a similar inclination towards Grammarly among students, attributing it to heightened confidence in their written work.

Delving deeper into the motivations behind students' adoption of Grammarly, Anditasari & Sitompul's (2022) qualitative study among English Department students in an Indonesian university shed light on an intriguing connection: The correlation between the use of Grammarly and students' confidence levels. Their findings echo those of Bahanshal (2021), emphasizing the pivotal role of online grammar checkers in boosting learners' confidence as a crucial aspect of effective language acquisition.

Nova's (2018) exploration of Indonesian postgraduate students' experiences with Grammarly provides further nuance to this narrative, elucidating the multifaceted benefits of the tool. Notably, Nova's participants acclaim Grammarly for its clarity of feedback and ease of use, echoing the positive perceptions expressed by Bahanshal's (2021) participants. These findings reflect the universality of Grammarly's appeal and effectiveness across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Moreover, insights from Caveleri & Dianati's (2016) study on Australian university students' perceptions of Grammarly and O'Neill & Russell's (2019) research on the impact of Grammarly's feedback on student satisfaction and confidence serve to enrich our understanding of the broader implications of online grammar checkers in educational

settings. By bringing forth the positive correlation between Grammarly usage and academic success, these studies reinforce the notion that online writing tools, such as Grammarly, are invaluable assets for language learners striving to enhance their writing proficiency.

In addition, Faisal and Carabella's (2023) study highlights the continued relevance and utility of Grammarly in educational contexts, putting forward its convenience and efficacy in academic writing. This view is further supported by Dewi's (2022) research on the positive feedback from students in EFL writing classes, emphasizing Grammarly's instrumental role in error identification, skill enhancement, and overall writing proficiency.

Furthermore, Yunita's (2020) investigation into Grammarly's impact on students' grammar proficiency highlights its efficacy as a pedagogical tool for addressing grammatical challenges and fostering learning through personalized feedback and explanations. By the same token, Ghufron & Rosyida's (2018) and Rejeki's (2023) studies report the transformative potential of Grammarly in EFL writing instruction, indicating its role in error reduction, self-reliance promotion, and overall writing competence enhancement.

In conclusion, the studies mentioned above show that online grammatical error checks have a significant impact on improving L2 writing skills. They showcase the numerous benefits of using tools like Grammarly, which can help English learners increase their confidence, proficiency, and academic achievements. By emphasizing the role of online checkers in language learning, these findings assert the importance of using technology to empower English learners in their quest for linguistic mastery.

3. Methodology

This section provides a detailed overview of the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed to investigate the perceptions of MA students at Ibn Tofail University regarding the use of Grammarly as an online checking tool for error correction.

3.1. Research Design

This study was conducted following a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative measures to provide a comprehensive understanding of MA students' perceptions regarding the adoption of Grammarly as an online error-checking tool. The study is based on the Technology Acceptance Model proposed by Davis (1986), which aims to account for the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of Information Technology (IT) (Davis, 1986, p.319).

3.2. Participants

The study sample comprises MA students in the English Department at Ibn Tofail University. A total of 60 students were invited to participate in the study using a convenience sampling method, taking into account participants' willingness and knowledge of the research area. However, only 37 students filled out the questionnaire, given the fact that 23 students do not use Grammarly as an error-checking tool. The study's participants, therefore, were 18 females and 19 males, aged between 20 and 43 years old.

3.3. Research Instruments

Following the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1986), a questionnaire was designed and distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire included four sections covering demographics, experience of using Grammarly, perceived usefulness, and limitations and challenges. A range of closed-ended and open-ended questions were adopted to collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.4. Data Analysis

To answer the research questions of this study, the data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative data obtained through closed-ended questions was analyzed using descriptive statistics SPSS to provide frequencies and percentages as means to summarize the responses based on the participants' usage, satisfaction levels, and perceived benefits of Grammarly. Qualitative data, on the other hand, was analyzed following an inductive approach based on the participants' responses.

4. Findings

This section outlines the key findings obtained from the questionnaire administered to MA students at the English department at Ibn Tofail University. Following the objectives of the study along with the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1986), the results of the study are in themes covering 'Experience of Using Grammarly', 'Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use', and 'Challenges and Limitations of using Grammarly.'

4.1. Experience of Using Grammarly

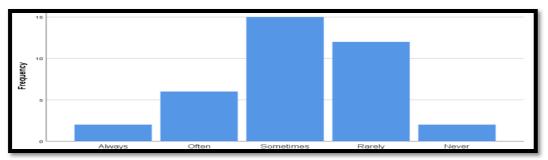


Figure 1: Grammarly Usage Frequency

Figure 1 illustrates the usage of Grammarly by the respondents in their writing assignments. Out of 37 participants, 40.5% (N = 15) stated that they 'Sometimes' use Grammarly, while 32.4% (N = 12) indicated that they 'Rarely' use it. Only 16.2% (N = 6) respondents reported that they use it 'Often,' while 5.4% (N = 2) respondents, respectively, expressed that they 'Always' or 'Never' use it.

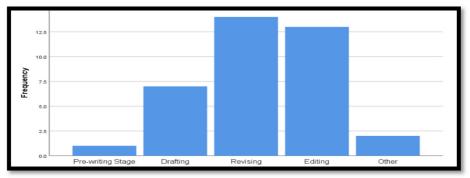


Figure 2: Stages of Using Grammarly for Checking Errors in Writing

Figure 2 represents the various stages of the writing process and the frequency of Grammarly usage among respondents. In the prewriting stage, 2.7% (N = 1) of respondents indicated using Grammarly. During the drafting stage, 18.9% (N = 7) reported adopting Grammarly, while 37.8% (N = 14) employed it during the revising stage. In the editing stage, 35.1% (N = 13) of respondents reported using Grammarly. Additionally, two respondents mentioned that they either "never use it" or "only use it as an add-on in Google Chrome while using Gmail."

4.2. Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use

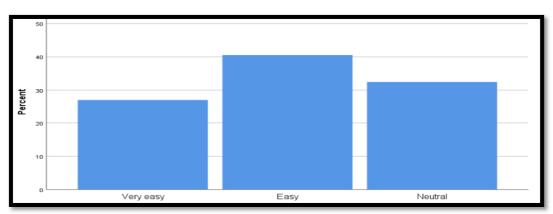


Figure 3: The Ease of Using Grammarly for Correcting Errors in Writing

In figure 3, the respondents provided their rating for the use of Grammarly in correcting writing errors. The responses ranged from very easy to very difficult. Out of the total respondents, 27% (N = 10) found Grammarly very easy to use, while 40.5% (N = 15) found it easy. On the other hand, 32.4% (N = 12) remained neutral about the ease of use of Grammarly, while none of the respondents expressed any difficulty in using it.

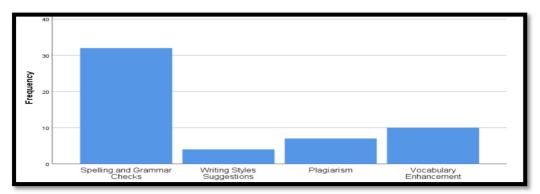


Figure 4: Grammarly Features

As figure 4 illustrates, participants were asked to select the Grammarly features they frequently use. The results show that 83.8% (N = 31) use Grammarly for spelling and grammar checks, 10.8% (N = 4) use it for writing style suggestions, 18.9% (N = 7) use it for plagiarism checks, and 27% (N = 10) use it for vocabulary enhancement.

	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Moderately Useful	Very Useful
Grammar suggestions	4 (7.5%)	20 (37.7%)	7 (13.2%)	6 (11.3%)
Spelling corrections	2 (3.8%)	7 (13.2%)	12 (22.6%)	15 (28.3%)
Punctuation suggestions	4 (7.5%)	14 (26.4%)	8 (15.1%)	10 (18.9%)
Clarity and conciseness	3 (5.7%)	18 (34.0%)	12 (22.6%)	4 (7.5%)
Vocabulary enhancement	5 (9.4%)	11 (20.8%)	13 (24.5%)	8 (15.1%)

Table 1: Usefulness of Grammarly Features

According to table 1, the usefulness of various Grammarly features was determined based on the practices of the participants. In terms of checking errors in writing, 37.7% (N = 20) found grammar suggestions to be somewhat useful, 13.2% (N = 7) thought they were moderately useful, 11.3% (N = 6) found them very useful, and 7.5% (N = 4) did not find them useful. For spelling corrections, 28.3% (N = 15) found it to be a very useful feature, 22.6% (N = 12) considered it moderately useful, 13.2% (N = 7) found it somewhat useful, while only 3.8% (N = 2) believed it was not very useful. Punctuation suggestions were perceived as somewhat useful by 26.4% (N = 14), 18.9% (N = 10) found them very useful, 15.1% (N = 8) considered them moderately useful, and 7.5% (N = 4) did not find them useful. For clarity and conciseness, 34% (N = 18) found this feature somewhat useful. As for vocabulary enhancement, 24.5% (N = 13) considered it a moderately useful feature, 20.8% (N = 11) found it somewhat useful, 15.1% (N = 8) perceived it as very useful, and 9.4% (N = 5) did not find it useful at all.

Not at All 1				Very Much 5	
5 (13.5%)	8 (21.6%)	10 (27%)	12 (32.4%)	2 (5.4%)	
Table 2. The Dale of Community in Language A community 147-iting					

Table 2: The Role of Grammarly in Improving Accuracy in Writing

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the role of Grammarly in improving the accuracy of their writing. The respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the role Grammarly plays in improving their writing accuracy. Out of the total respondents, 32.4% (N=12) reported that their writing accuracy improved quite a bit after using Grammarly, 27% (N=10) remained neutral, 21.6% (N=8) believed that their writing accuracy somewhat improved, while 13.5% (N=5) stated that Grammarly did not improve their writing accuracy, and 5.4% (N=2) reported that Grammarly helps improve their accuracy in writing.

Extremely Valuable 1				Not Valuable at All 5
6 (16.2%)	12 (32.4%)	9 (24.3%)	9 (24.3%)	1 (2.7%

 Table 3: The Overall Perception Regarding the Importance of Grammarly for

 Correcting Errors in Academic Writing

Table 3 highlights the significance of Grammarly as perceived by MA students at Ibn Tofail University. Out of the total respondents, 32.4% (N = 12) of participants considered Grammarly to be valuable, while 16.2% (N = 6) referred to it as extremely valuable. On the other hand, 24.3% (N = 9) of participants reported that it was not valuable or remained neutral, while only 2.7% (N = 1) stated that it was not valuable at all.

In order to better understand the benefits of using Grammarly in terms of its usefulness and ease of use, participants were asked to further provide their perceptions by answering open-ended questions. Their answers highlight the benefits of different features that Grammarly offers for error-checking in writing:

- Participant 1: "It helps realize my mistakes in punctuation as well as spelling."
- Participant 2: "While writing articles, I tend not to focus much on spelling mistakes. I believe Grammarly enhances this side quite significantly."
- Participant 3: "It has helped me proofread my work faster without having to reread the whole thing since they underline what needed to be corrected for you."
- Participant 4: "It has helped me write concise and coherent research papers using the correct tense."
- Participant 5: "In terms of style and organization of ideas."
- Participant 6: "Grammarly has significantly improved my writing by correcting grammatical errors, enhancing vocabulary, ensuring originality through plagiarism checks, and refining the clarity and tone of my assignments and research papers."

4.3. Challenges and Limitations of Using Grammarly

89.19% (N=33) of the participants provided feedback on the challenges they faced while using Grammarly. The prevalent responses include:

- Participant 1: "Based on my experience, while Grammarly has been largely beneficial for error correction in my writing, I have encountered a few challenges. Sometimes, it can misinterpret complex sentences or creative writing, suggesting changes that do not align with my intended tone or style. Additionally, Grammarly may overlook nuances in subject-specific terminology, especially in technical or academic writing, leading to incorrect suggestions. Lastly, relying heavily on Grammarly can inadvertently impact my learning process by making me less vigilant about identifying and understanding my writing errors independently."
- Participant 2: "Sometimes the suggestions are questionable."
- Participant 3: "While correcting spelling mistakes, it does not give the intended word but the wrong one."
- Participant 4: "It doesn't always understand my writing style."
- Participant 5: "There are no challenges, but there is the issue of the free and paid version."
- Participant 6: "Sometimes it suggests terrible alternatives for sentence structure."

5. Discussion

The results of this study offer valuable insights into the attitudes of MA students at Ibn Tofail University towards Grammarly. Of particular interest is the fact that a considerable number of these students reported utilizing Grammarly on a regular basis across multiple phases of their writing process. This finding corresponds with earlier research that has indicated the widespread adoption of Grammarly by higher education students (Faisal & Carabella, 2023; O'Neill & Russell, 2019).

When it comes to the distribution of Grammarly usage in various stages of the writing process, results have indicated that 37.8% of students use it during the revising stage of their writing process. The editing stage comes in second place, with 35.1% of students using Grammarly during that phase. These findings suggest that students tend to use Grammarly when they seek to polish and refine their written work, particularly in checking their spelling and grammar (83.8%). These results are supported by Dewi's 2022 study, in which over half of the participants (53.3%) reported using Grammarly occasionally for editing purposes.

The participants in this study perceive Grammarly as a valuable and easy-to-use tool. The majority found it either very easy (27%) or easy (40.5%). Moreover, table 3 highlights the perceived value of Grammarly among MA students, with a significant proportion considering it valuable (32.4%) or extremely valuable (16.2%), taking into account how its features, which are mentioned in table 1, help them rectify their grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and get *"rid of redundancy"* as was expressed in some open-ended comments. These results are consistent with ones from various studies, notably by Caveleri and Dianati (2016), O'Neill and Russell (2019), Bahanshal (2021), Dewi (2022), and Faisal and Carabella (2023), where the greater part of the participants reported positive perceptions concerning Grammarly's usefulness and ease of use.

Although Grammarly has certain benefits, it also has its challenges and limitations. Some respondents identified some challenges they encountered when using Grammarly, particularly errors in structure and style. They attest that the suggestions provided by Grammarly are "*questionable*" and even "*incorrect*". Some also pointed out that although the premium version provides better suggestions and feedback, it is still a major limitation as it requires payment. Similar limitations were revealed in the studies by Faisal and Carabella (2023), Dewi (2022), and Nova (2018).

6. Implications

The study offers valuable implications across various domains. Language educators and curriculum developers can implement Grammarly to enhance students' writing proficiency and self-editing skills, particularly during revising and editing. Furthermore, the study paves the way for future research exploring Grammarly's effectiveness in diverse educational contexts and student populations, alongside policy considerations for integrating writing assistance tools into institutional support services.

Therefore, the importance of professional development for students in utilizing writing assistance tools effectively stresses the need for workshops or tutorials to maximize their utility. In this respect, considering these implications can contribute to enhancing writing proficiency and supporting students' academic success in higher education contexts.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of MA students at Ibn Tofail University regarding the use of Grammarly as an online error-checking tool. The findings of the study revealed that participants utilize Grammarly to varying degrees, with a preference for occasional use. Participants generally perceived Grammarly as a useful and easy-to-use tool for correcting their errors in writing, particularly during the revising and editing stages. However, participants also reported the difficulties they encountered and the limitations of this tool, especially at the level of interpreting complex sentence structure and providing irrelevant suggestions regarding style and content.

On the other hand, the findings of the study also highlight the significance of integrating Grammarly into writing instruction to enhance students' self-editing skills and writing proficiency. Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the role of Grammarly as an online error-checking tool in supporting students' academic writing endeavors.

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