The Perceptions of EFL students on using Grammarly and QuillBot in Academic Writing Enhancement

Khoiriyatul Umah[1], Fitri Nurdianingsih[2], Refi Ranto Rozak[3]
English Education Department Faculty of Languages and Arts Education
IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro
ukhoiriyatul@gmail.com[1], fitri.nurdianingsih@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id[2],
refi.ranto@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id[3]

Abstract — There are many online platforms that can help students to assist their academic writing, especially in writing a thesis. To proofread their writing, students usually use online grammar checkers such as Grammarly and to paraphrase, students usually use QuillBot to improve their academic writing for the better. This study was conducted to investigate EFL university students' perceptions of using Grammarly and QuillBot to improve academic writing. The descriptive qualitative method was used throughout this study. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the data for this research. By conducting this study, the researcher hopes that students can have an overview of Grammarly and QuillBot as useful tools to help improve the quality of their thesis writing. The results of this study show that Grammarly and QuillBot provide benefits for students. Grammarly greatly helps students in correcting their writing, and QuillBot helps students in paraphrasing sentences and avoiding plagiarism. However, Grammarly and QuillBot still have some drawbacks, such as incorrect proofreading and features limitation for the free version, but students agree that Grammarly and QuillBot help them a lot.

Keywords — Academic writing, Grammarly, QuillBot

Abstrak — Ada banyak platform online yang dapat membantu siswa untuk membantu penulisan akademik mereka, terutama dalam menulis tesis. Untuk mengoreksi tulisan mereka, mahasiswa biasanya menggunakan pemeriksa tata bahasa online seperti Grammarly dan untuk memparafrase kalimat, mahasiswa biasanya menggunakan QuillBot untuk meningkatkan tulisan akademis mereka menjadi lebih baik. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa EFL dalam menggunakan Grammarly dan QuillBot untuk meningkatkan tulisan akademis. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Data untuk penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara. Dengan melakukan penelitian ini, peneliti berharap agar mahasiswa dapat memiliki gambaran mengenai Grammarly dan QuillBot sebagai alat yang berguna untuk membantu meningkatkan kualitas penulisan tesis mereka. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Grammarly dan QuillBot memberikan manfaat bagi mahasiswa. Grammarly sangat membantu mahasiswa dalam mengoreksi tulisan mereka, dan QuillBot membantu mahasiswa dalam memparafrasekan kalimat dan menghindari plagiarisme. Namun, Grammarly dan QuillBot masih memiliki beberapa kekurangan, seperti pengoreksian yang tidak tepat dan fitur yang terbatas untuk versi gratis, tetapi para siswa setuju bahwa Grammarly dan QuillBot sangat membantu mereka.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four crucial skills in English that students must acquire, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Knoch & Storch (2016) stated that Writing is a ability that enables authors to communicate their ideas and thoughts by using meaningful language and mental imagery in written form.

. Compared to other skills, writing is considered the most complex as it demands precision in grammar, spelling, punctuation, as well as systematic text structure. Hutagaol et al. (2024) added Writing is a skill that primarily develops by practice on paper, but it is also partially a talent, much like conversing with others on paper or a computer screen. Especially in Academic writing, such as essays, articles, journals, and thesis, requires critical thinking and the ability to organize ideas logically and coherently.

However, many EFL students face major challenges in academic writing, ranging from limited academic vocabulary, text structure, idea development, to low self-confidence and lack of practice. According to Nurdianingsih et al., (2024) EFL students face challenges from linguistic deficiencies, cognitive hurdles, and psychological factors. These difficulties manifest in various forms, including limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, anxiety, and lack of motivation, impacting students' writing performance.

Academic writing is difficult and complex since it demands students to employ critical thinking and write well (Lin & Morrison, 2021). Al Badi (2015) adds that this encompasses several elements that are thought to constitute the cornerstone of effective academic writing. Students may become frustrated and lose motivation to study writing due to its intricacy. Karyuatry (2018) argued that students should be conversant with a range of grammatical norms, ranging from sentence construction and forms to the usage of articles, in addition to developing their writing ideas.

To overcome these obstacles, various artificial intelligence-based technologies such as Grammarly and QuillBot are being utilized. Both apps offer features that help students correct errors in grammar, spelling, paraphrasing, and sentence structure. Ghufron & Nurdianingsih (2019) stated Writing is presented as a process that involves organization, critical thinking, and effective concept expression, assisted by tools like collaborative projects and automated feedback systems. Technology is required to identify the writing errors made by the students to correct them. Because proper grammar is important, having a grammar checker available when writing helps students catch typos and other linguistic issues in their writing. There are a lot of tools that assist in enhance the writing quality. Such as Grammarly and QuillBot Software.

According to Grammarly (2024), Grammarly is a simple tool that can assist students in writing academic with their writing by checking for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. It also offers thorough and helpful feedback, including suggestions for improvement to make the writing more readable, precise, effective, error-free, and impactful with a high evaluation speed and accuracy rate. Additionally, Grammarly offers word suggestions to help students write better. Further, Grammarly provides both error fix and a position check for writing errors.

The other writing assistant platform is QuillBot. QuillBot provides a product that suggests paraphrases, grammar checkers, summarizers, and even plagiarism detectors. QuillBot provides a solution by helping with the paraphrasing process when students lack the willingness to do it manually. (Kusuma, 2020). With technological advancements, various writing tools such as Grammarly and QuillBot have emerged to assist students in enhancing the quality of their writing. The use of these tools can significantly contribute to the writing process of English as a foreign language (EFL) student.

Some previous studies explained, Grammarly has positive impact and increases students learning performance in correcting grammar in their writing (Fitriana&Nurazni, 2022). Not only Grammarly, QuillBot also one of writing assistance tools used by students. QuillBot can be used to avoid plagiarism by paraphrasing sentences and improve the academic vocabularies. Therefore, students use QuillBot as a tool for paraphrasing. Syahnaz and Fithriani (2023), said that some students determine this tool positively overall and find it useful for paraphrasing. This statement is supported by research conducted by Rahmani (2023) Some students used QuillBot to improving their writing skills and productivity while mitigating plagiarism concerns.

As previously explained, each study investigated these two writing aids independently. Particularly, this study explores at the writing tools that students utilized and their perceptions of QuillBot and Grammarly. To achieve this goal, the following research questions guided this study: What are student's perceptions of using Grammarly and QuillBot to improve academic writing? This study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions towards using Grammarly and QuillBot in improving their academic writing skills. Through this study, it is hoped that an understanding of the effectiveness as well as the limitations of using technology in the academic writing learning process can be gained.

RESEARH METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative descriptive research. A descriptive qualitative study aims to describe and comprehend the phenomenon of the research subject, including behavior, perception, motivation, and action. (Moleong, 2010). This study conducted in the eighth semester of English Department at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the school year 2024/2025. The study conducted from January to April 2025. The series of research activities included several stages; First, preparation of the research design, instrument and application for permission to related parties. Second, collecting data through questionnaires and interviews. Third, analyzed data and presented the data result. The author used questionnaires and conducted a semi-structured interview to get deep data. The population of this research was 61 students of the English Department in the eighth semester. 30 respondents were chosen as sampling techniques to find respondents for this research.

In order to ensure quick response from respondents and facilitate data analysis across all collected surveys, the author in this study employed a closed-ended questionnaire. To distribute and gather the students' responses to the surveys, the author used Google Form. The questionnaire in this study was completed by thirty

students. The Likert scale was used in this study, and there were five possible responses: strongly disagree, agree, disagree, neutral, and strongly agree.

To ensure the accuracy of the data, the author used triangulation data sources and employed data collection techniques. Data collection, data reduction, data display, and data verification were the methods used for the data analysis. Data collection is the process of obtaining the information required to achieve research objectives. This study used questionnaires, interviews, and documents as its data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data are collected from the results of the questionnaires and interviews. The authors present the findings and discussion of research to answer research questions about the use Grammarly and QuillBot by EFL students in the process of Academic writing and students' perceptions of using Grammarly and QuillBot to improve academic writing. The research was conducted at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, especially for eighth semester English language students who have Writing a thesis.

In this study, researcher used 2 questionnaires, pre questionnaires and post questionnaires. Pre questionnaire was distributed to all eighth year English Education students aimed to find out how many students were familiar with using Grammarly and Quillbot. Pre questionnaire was distributed on February 21, 2025. From all questionnaire feedback, the survey data revealed that 30 students were familiar and used Grammarly and QuillBot in the process of writing thesis. Grammarly as a tool to check for grammar mistakes in their thesis writing, and QuillBot as a tool to paraphrase sentences in their thesis writing.

The post questionnaire was distributed on 1-8 March 2025, which aims to make it easier for the author to distribute questionnaires and reduce paper waste. The author also interviewed to gain detailed information that support the result of questionnaires. The respondents that selected in the interviews section is 10 students. The selection of the respondents' interviews was chosen based on the answer of questionnaires. In this section, the data findings from the study will be examined according to of the research problem.

The EFL students' perceptions of using Grammarly and QuillBot to enhance academic writing

Table 1. the questionnaire result of the perception of using Grammarly

Indicators	SA	A	N	D	SD
Influence on Writing Quality	10%	71.7%	15.8%	1.6%	0.8%
Increased Self-Confidence	7.8%	68.9%	21.1%	2.2%	0%
Features Limitations	2.5%	64.2%	22.5%	7.5%	0.8%
Satisfaction with Result	3.3%	70%	23.3%	0%	3.3%

The findings revealed that Grammarly received highly positive responses in terms of improving writing quality. On average, 71.7% of the participants agreed, and 10% strongly agreed that Grammarly helps in correcting grammar, spelling, punctuation, and enhancing coherence and fluency. These findings align with the

study by O'Neill & Russell (2019), which highlighted Grammarly's effectiveness in helping students in academic writing especially on grammar and mechanics.

On self-confidence, 68.9% of respondents agreed, with 7.8% strongly agreeing, that using Grammarly increased their perception of professionalism and confidence in their writing. This demonstrates how Grammarly helps students psychologically when they are writing their thesis. The result was support by Ranalli's (2018) statement that writing tools can boost students' motivation and reduce writing anxiety. In line with the interview results, the author discovered some similarities on the use Grammarly in thesis writing that the quality of their thesis writing improved than before using Grammarly and they felt more confidence with their thesis writing.

"After using Grammarly, my grammar became better than before. After being corrected, it makes me more confident, more confident in my writing. So, I'm not afraid anymore if it's wrong. Because it has been checked by Grammarly. So, when I was being advised, I was more confident with my writing." **(MS, Interviewed in 20 March 2025)**

However, students also identified some limitations. The majority (64.2%) agreed that the free version is limited and requires a stable internet connection, while 22.5% remained neutral. Some noted that not all suggestions were contextually accurate. These limitations are also noted in the study by Dembsey (2017), which argued that while Grammarly offers surface-level corrections, it may not fully support deeper content revision. Despite some limitations, the overall satisfaction was high, with 70% agreeing and 3.3% strongly agreeing that Grammarly helped improve the quality of their thesis writing.

Table 2. the questionnaire result of the perception of using QuillBot

Indicators	SA	A	N	D	SD
Influence on Writing Quality	9.2%	70.8%	13.3%	6.7%	0%
Increased Self-Confidence	2.2%	56.7%	38.9%	2.2%	0%
Features Limitations	2.5%	70.8%	22.5%	4.2%	0%
Satisfaction with Result	3.3%	70%	20%	6.7%	0%

Based on the table above can be seen that QuillBot obtained positive reviews as well, especially for paraphrasing. According to 70.8% of students, QuillBot improved the quality of their writing, particularly in terms of readability and vocabulary variety. 76.7% of respondents believed that QuillBot contributed in vocabulary variation, which is crucial for academic writing.

Most of students agree that the quality of thesis writing was increased. This is in line with the interview results, the author discovered some similarities on the use QuillBot in thesis writing that the quality of their thesis writing improved than before using QuillBot. The used of QuillBot helps to produce better and more comprehensible paraphrases, avoid plagiarism and increase the variety of vocabulary in thesis writing.

"QuillBot is very helpful in paraphrasing sentences and avoiding too much similarity of text to the original source. The paraphrasing tool can rephrase sentences to be more

formal and varied. so, I became more familiar with synonyms and new sentence structures." (IL, Interviewed in 20 March 2025)

However, only 56.7% of students agreed that it increased their self-confidence, while 38.9% were neutral about its impact on confidence. This suggests that QuillBot may not offer the same psychological confidence as Grammarly, despite its functional use. 70.8% of respondents agreed that the free version has limitations on use and that certain paraphrases were not appropriate for the context. This is similar to what Sydorenko et al. (2022) said about the necessity of human supervision while utilizing AI-based paraphrase tools. Despite certain limitations, 70% of students felt satisfaction, indicating that QuillBot was helpful for increasing the variety and clarity of their writing.

Students generally had a positive perception of Grammarly and QuillBot in improving their academic writing. t was considered that Grammarly was a useful and efficient tool for minimizing grammatical errors and enhancing writing mechanics, resulting in compositions that were more correct and fluent. Since it enhanced the quality of their thesis writing, the instant feedback option was greatly valued. However, some students complained about the free version's limitations and dependency on the internet.

QuillBot is perceived as user-friendly and beneficial in enhancing writing productivity and reducing writing anxiety. Students reported that QuillBot's organizing and grammar features contribute to better writing quality. Importantly, QuillBot's paraphrasing function is valued for helping students develop paraphrasing skills, expand vocabulary, and improve sentence structure, which are essential for academic writing.

Overall, both tools are perceived positively by students. Grammarly stands out in terms of grammar correction and boosting confidence, while QuillBot excels in paraphrasing and vocabulary enhancement. These results are consistent with prior studies that endorse the integration of AI-assisted writing tools in higher education, provided they are used critically and in combination with instructor feedback.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on EFL students' perceptions of the use of Grammarly and QuillBot in improving academic writing skills, it can be concluded that both tools make a significant and complementary contribution to the writing process.

Grammarly is used by students to correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure errors quickly and effectively, thus helping them produce writing that is more accurate and in accordance with English rules. Meanwhile, QuillBot is mostly utilized to enrich vocabulary, improve sentence variation, and assist in paraphrasing and sentence reordering, which is very important in complex academic writing.

Students' perceptions of both tools were very positive. They find it helpful in improving the quality of their writing, reducing anxiety in writing, and gaining continuous learning through automatic feedback. However, limitations such as limited free features and dependence on internet connection are important to note.

Overall, using Grammarly and QuillBot together can be an effective strategy in supporting the development of EFL students' academic writing skills. The integration of these two tools in writing lessons can enrich the learning experience and encourage students' independence in improving their English skills. Future research could explore combined feedback strategies and long-term effects on writing proficiency to further optimize these technological interventions.

REFERENCES

Al Badi, I. A. H. (2015). Academic writing difficulties of ESL learners. In The 2015 WEI international academic conference proceedings (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 65-78). Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/download/76894055/Academic_Writing_Difficulties.pdf.

Dembsey, J. M. (2017). Closing the Grammarly® Gaps: A Study of Claims and Feedback from an Online Grammar Program. *The Writing Center Journal*, 36(1), 63–96. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/44252638.

Fitriana, K., & Nurazni, L. (2022). Exploring students' perception of using grammarly to check grammar in their writing. JET (Journal of English Teaching), 8(1), 15–25. https://doi.org/10.33541/jet.v8i1.3044.

Ghufron, M. A., & Nurdianingsih, F. (2019). Flipped Teaching with Call in EFL Writing Class: How Does It Work and Affect Learner Autonomy? European Journal of Educational Research, 8(4), 983-997. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1231633.

Grammarly. (2024). About Grammarly. Retrieved from (Grammarly Website) https://www.grammarly.com.

Hutagaol, C., Pamungkas, M. Y., Rozak, R. R., IKIP Siliwangi, & IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. (2024). An analysis of the use WhatsApp media in teaching writing descriptive text. In *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)* (Vol. 7, Issue 3, pp. 516–522). Retrieved from https://journal.ikipsiliwangi.ac.id/index.php/project/article/view/8955.

Karyuatry, L. (2018). Grammarly as a tool to improve students' writing quality: Free online-proofreader across the boundaries. *JSSH (Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Humaniora)*, 2(1), 83-89.Retrieved from https://jurnalnasional.ump.ac.id/index.php/JSSH/article/view/2297.

Knoch, U., Rouhshad, A., & Stroch, N. (2014). Does the writing of undergraduate ESL students develop after one year of study in an English-medium university? Assessing Writing, 21, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2014.01.001

Kusuma, I. P. I. (2020). Teaching English with technology: Basic theories and teaching ideas. Indonesia: Deep Publish.

Lin, L. H., & Morrison, B. (2021). Challenges in academic writing: Perspectives of Engineering faculty and L2 postgraduate research students. English for Specific Purposes, 63, 59-70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2021.03.004.

Moleong, J.L (2010) Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya

Nurdianingsih, F., Fitriati, S. W., Astuti, P., & Rozi, F. (2024). Writing Difficulties Faced by Efl Writing Learners of English Education Study Program. *Proceedings of Fine Arts, Literature, Language, and Education*, 461-476. Retrieved from https://proceeding.unnes.ac.id/icoella/article/view/3710.

O'Neill, R., & Russell, A. (2019). Stop! Grammar time: University students' perceptions of the automated feedback program Grammarly. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 13(1), A45–A57. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3795.

Rahmani, N. E. F. (2023). Undergraduate Students 'Perceptions on Quillbot Paraphrasing Tool. Scripta English Department Journal, 10(2), 182–190. https://doi.org/10.37729/scripta.v10i2.3674.

Ranalli, J. (2018). Automated writing evaluation and the development of learner autonomy in writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 22(2), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1428994.

Syahnaz, M., & Fithriani, R. (2023). Utilizing Artificial Intelligence-based Paraphrasing Tool in EFL Writing Class: A Focus on Indonesian University Students' Perceptions. Scope Journal of English Language Teaching, 7(2), 210. https://doi.org/10.30998/scope.v7i2.14882.

Sydorenko, T., et al. (2022). Assessing AI-based Summarizing and Paraphrasing Tools: Implications for Academic Integrity. *Kent State University*.