

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING GRAMMARLY ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING QUALITY

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## Abstract

Grammarly has got a lot of attention among academics especially because it is a powerful tool that can be used by writers to improve their writing quality. They need it as a medium for correcting writing errors. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of using Grammarly on the students' writing quality of the eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu. In particular, this study explores if there is any significant effect of Grammarly on students' writing quality in terms of grammatical accuracy, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. This is quantitative research using the pre-experimental method. The subject consists of 30 students selected using a purposive sampling technique. The data were collected from a pre-test and a post-test of writing an explanation text written before and after being corrected using Grammarly. The hypothesis test was conducted using Wilcoxon Test. The result shows an alternative hypothesis which is the Asymp. Sig. is  $0.00 < 0.05$ . So, Grammarly has a significant effect on students' writing quality in eleventh grade at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu. This study implies that Grammarly can be useful as a learning media as self-editing for students to improve their writing ability.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human needs language for communication. It can be in the form of spoken or written language. Unlike speaking, writing enables the communicator to express his or her ideas in a more structured way. As Nunan (2003) mentioned that writing is a working concept that generates ideas, and thoughts, and arranges them into sentences and paragraphs that the reader can understand. In addition, Fairbairn and Winch in Fitria (2021) explained that the

purpose of writing is to express thoughts and demonstrate proficiency in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical conventions. In writing, it is necessary to combine general ideas and how the author arranges them into good paragraphs that are clear enough for the reader to read and can apply spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Out of the four language skills to master (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), writing is often considered by many as the most difficult one to master. It can be seen that most students make mistakes in grammar, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. Some mistakes are made when students misunderstand English grammar (Kumala, 2018). According to Fitria (2021), students may make mistakes when writing and completing an English sentence or essay in some aspects of writing such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. A study by Emmaryana (2019) found that English grammar is more complicated than Indonesian grammar. British Council Foundation (2023) stated that Indonesian is relatively easy to learn due to its simple grammar rules. Unlike Indonesian, which uses the same verbs for past, present and future situations, English has 16 different tenses. For this reason, most students agree that writing is the most difficult skill to master.

Based on the writer's experience in Teaching Training Program or Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan (PLP), the writer taught English in XI IPS 2 at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu from August to November 2021. Students have studied Opinion and Thought in Chapter 2 and Analytical Exposition in Chapter 5 of their handbooks. The material in Chapters 2 and 5 has the same tenses, namely the simple present tense. When given assignments, some students still wrote some grammar, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation errors even though the subject had been explained by the teacher.

The same phenomenon was found by Alaa (2020) in that some students did not review the material; had less interest in getting grades; family and society; teachers' methods; students' health; lack of effort and attention. These are some of the reasons why students forget the material even though it has been studied repeatedly. Therefore, this makes the students' writing quality decrease.

Regie (2005) stated that the quality of writing is when students explored writing in-depth. The quality of writing can be seen from the content of the writing and the writing mechanism, namely sentence construction, language style, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by McNamara (2010), excellent writing presents effective and consistent information with well-chosen details.

The writing mistakes affect the students' writing quality. Failures in grammar and writing mechanics result in bad or poor scores. Therefore, Spandel in Kalsum (2020) identified a good writing quality has six criteria: (1) idea, when writing we need to think about the main theme, content, and message; (2) fluency is the ability to write with a natural flow and rhythm; (3) organization is a pattern of internal structure, central threads, and logical and sometimes intriguing ideas within scripts; (4) word selection is the use of rich, colorful, and concise language so it can move and enlighten the reader to read; (5) voice is the thoughts with emotions and beliefs of the writer carried through the words to form a bond between the

reader and the writer; (6) convention are how the author uses grammatical and mechanical accuracy in spelling, paragraphs, usage, punctuation, and capitalization.

Based on the writer's informal interviews with teachers, teachers rarely use online media in learning to write. Students are taught to write using only textbooks and pictures. Students are also rarely given feedback on their writing mistakes because there is not much study time. According to Emmaryana (2019), students wrote writing errors repeatedly because no one corrected the errors. Some teachers are not aware of students' writing errors and do not correct them. This caused the students to not know their mistakes and assume it is correct but is wrong. As students, they should learn about grammar and mechanics in writing. Teachers must improve their teaching strategies and can also use technology as a writing assistant.

From the statement above, students need to use online learning to check their writing errors. Bouchoux in Fitria (2021) showed that there are several online learning assistants that users can use to improve their English writing skills. One of them is Grammarly. Grammarly is an online proofreading website that can be used to scan documents for grammar errors (Karyuatry, 2018). Moore (2018) defined Grammarly as a kind of application that automatically detects potential grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, and style mistakes in writing. Grammarly helps people like teachers, educators, scientists, and students to describe and understand how such used computer software can learn English when errors are discovered (Mubarok, et al., 2020).

Grammarly is very necessary to help students in the writing process. Fadhilah, et al (2019) explained that Grammarly can detect right and wrong sentences, as well as give an assessment of writing. Grammarly explains to students to correct mistakes in their writing. Students can click on the underlined word for a detailed explanation of true and false words. Grammarly also explains 'Performance Scores', so students know their abilities in writing.

Grammarly has two figures, namely the free and premium versions of Grammarly. Grammarly for free can help users correct writing errors, such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (Grammarly, 2017). Grammarly's premium version is a paid version. The premium version of Grammarly offers clarity, vocabulary, and tone improvements for \$12.00 per month (Grammarly, 2017). Fitriani (2020) claimed that Grammarly for premium offers at least seven features, including inconsistent writing, unclear structure, excessive use of words, wrong words, inappropriate tone, intensive language, and plagiarism protection. Compared to the premium version, Grammarly's free version is chosen by many students because it is free and can check basic writing, such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and conciseness.

Some studies already investigated the perceptions of the students about Grammarly on improving the quality of students' writing through interviews, tests, and questionnaires. A study by Nova (2018) found that this program has provided feedback with explanations and examples prompt evaluation, and free service. Another study by Parra, et al (2019) also revealed that the Grammarly application can help them find errors in writing. Pratama (2020) also found that students believed Grammarly was useful for checking grammar, punctuation,

and spelling. Grammatical feedback can help improve students' grammar. In the line with this, a study by Soegiyarto, et al (2020) showed that Grammarly has helped improve their overall writing performance. In addition, Fahmi & Rachmijati (2021) argued that the application of Grammarly can help students improve their ability to express their thoughts and feelings. Then, a study by Halim, et al (2022) found that Grammarly facilitates independent learning for students by encouraging them to improve their writing quality.

From the previous studies above, there are similarities and differences to this study. Previous studies used analysis research, questionnaire instrument, college students as research samples, qualitative research design, and different locations, and several studies had different results, while the similarity was examining the application of Grammarly. This research also focuses on the effectiveness of Grammarly as an online learning media in improving students' writing quality, especially in grammar and writing mechanics. This study is the first study about Grammarly in English Education of the Universitas Riau.

In April 2022, the eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu are already in the second semester. Based on the syllabus of senior high school, one type of text that must be mastered by students in the second semester is explanation text. The explanation text material is in Chapter 8. According to Refnaldi (2010), explanation texts function as factual texts to explain the process of natural phenomena. According to Kemdikbud (2017), an explanation text is one of the parts of texts that deals with something happened that and elaborates on how and why a phenomenon or event happened in scientific and technical. This type of text uses the same tense as the Analytical Exposition in Chapter 5. So, this text will be used for the students' writing tests in this study.

This study raised Grammarly as a research topic. It focussed on the writing conventions, such as grammar and writing mechanics. Based on the problem above, the writer tested the students to write an explanation text to analyze the effectiveness of Grammarly on the writing quality of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research method. The study design was a pre-experimental research design to find out whether there was a significant difference between the students' writing quality in eleventh grade at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu when using Grammarly. To be more specific, this design applied a one-group pretest-posttest design. Ary, et al (2018) explained that one group pretest-posttest design usually involves three steps: (1) administering a pre-test; (2) applying the experimental treatment; and (3) administering a post-test.

## Setting and Participants

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu. The data was collected from XI IPS students for the 2021/2022 academic year from April to May 2022. Participants of this study were students from one particular class in SMAN Ujung Batu (XI IPS 2 class) which consisted of 34 students. They were selected as the sample of this study using purposive sampling. The sample was chosen because the writer had experience teaching in the class. The writer knew some of the students' writing errors from their assignments. Students were known to be active in learning and doing assignments on time.

## Data Collection Method and Analysis

Writing an explanation text was conducted as a research instrument. The research procedures used were as follows: 1) In the pre-test, students received an explanation about explanation text, how to write it, and the mechanics of writing. After that, students were asked to write an explanation text. They could create themes such as natural and social phenomena. This was intended to determine the quality of students' writing and to find out the strengths and weaknesses of students in writing; 2) After the pre-test, students got a treatment. The treatment was conducted for 3 meetings. The treatment was to teach students how to write an explanation text and explain grammar and writing mechanics. This treatment informed about what Grammarly was; the benefits of Grammarly for students; and teach how to use Grammarly to check writing errors; 3) In the post-test, students also wrote an explanation with a creative theme that they like. They could write about natural or social phenomena. After that, the student's writing results through Cohen's rubric in Azzah (2019). The Cohen rubric is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The scoring rubric for grammar and writing mechanics

<b>Grammar</b>		
<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Grammar	5 (Excellent)	No errors, full control of the complex structure
	4 (Good)	Almost no errors, good control of the structure
	3 (Average)	Some errors, fair control of the structure
	2 (Poor)	Many errors, poor control of the structure
	1 (Very Poor)	Dominated by errors, no control of the structure.
<b>Writing Mechanics</b>		
<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Spelling	5 (Excellent)	Mastery of spelling.
	4 (Good)	Few errors in spelling.
	3 (Average)	A fair number of errors in spelling
	2 (Poor)	Frequent errors in spelling.
	1 (Very Poor)	No control over spelling.

Punctuation	5 (Excellent)	Mastery of punctuation.
	4 (Good)	Few punctuation errors.
	3 (Average)	A fair number of errors in punctuation
	2 (Poor)	Frequent errors in punctuation.
	1 (Very Poor)	No control over punctuation.
Capitalization	5 (Excellent)	Mastery of capitalization.
	4 (Good)	Few errors in capitalization.
	3 (Average)	A fair number of capitalization.
	2 (Poor)	Frequent errors in capitalization
	1 (Very Poor)	No control over capitalization.

In this study, the pre-test and post-test data were analyzed using Statistical Products and Service Solution (SPSS 22). The Wilcoxon Test was used to determine the significant difference in the use of Grammarly on the quality of students writing.

## FINDINGS

### The Results Pre-test

In this study, 30 students in class XI IPS 2 had taken a pre-test. The pre-test was carried out on May 16th, 2021. Students were asked to write on the theme of their choice. Students were welcome to choose one of the themes, namely natural or social phenomena. Then, the writer collected the results of their pre-test. Statistics of the pre-test are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The statistics of the pre-test

No.	Score	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
1.	60	Fair	14	46.7%	63.3
2.	62	Fair	1	3.3%	
3.	65	Fair	8	26.7%	
4.	68	Fair	6	20.0%	
5.	70	Fair	1	3.3%	
Total		Fair	30	100%	63.3

From the data above, it can be seen that the lowest score is 60, but it is the score that gets the highest frequency and percentage, it is 14 students and 46.7%. 7 students get a score of more than 65. The mean score is 63.3. The pre-test scores obtained by all students of class XI IPS 2 were included in the fair criteria.

## The Results of the Post-test

When doing the post-test, students were welcome to choose the theme of natural or social phenomena to write an explanation text. The post-test was conducted on May 30th, 2022. Students used Grammarly to check and edit grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors in their written texts. This post-test was intended to know the students' writing quality after receiving treatment.

After gaining the score, the author calculated the score using the SPSS 22.0 program. Statistics of the post-test are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The statistics of the post-test

No.	Score	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	73	Good	1	3.3%
2.	74	Good	1	3.3%
3.	75	Good	3	10.0%
4.	76	Good	1	3.3%
5.	78	Good	4	13.3%
6.	80	Good	6	20.0%
7.	82	Good	2	6.7%
8.	84	Good	1	3.3%
9.	85	Good	2	6.7%
10.	88	Excellent	2	3.3%
11.	90	Excellent	2	6.7%
12.	92	Excellent	2	6.7%
13.	95	Excellent	3	10.0%
Total		Good	30	100%

From the table above, students' scores are included in the good and excellent categories. There are 21 students who get good grades while those who get the excellent category 9 students. The score of 80 is the score with the highest frequency, namely 6 students with a percentage of 20.0%. 3 students get the highest score of 95 with a percentage of 10.0% while for the lowest score of 73, there is only 1 student with a percentage of 3.3%. The mean score is 82.76.

## Normality Test

A normality test is used to verify that the data is normally distributed. This study used the Shapiro-Wilk Test for the measurement of the normality test with the significant value ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Normality test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
<b>Pre-test</b>	.296	30	.000	.795	30	.000
<b>Post-test</b>	.192	30	.006	.921	30	.028

Based on the table above, the significant value in the pre-test shows 0.00 which is lower than 0.05 ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) which means the data is not normally distributed. Furthermore, the value of significance in the post-test shows 0.028 which is also lower than 0.05 ( $0.028 < 0.05$ ) which means the data is not normally distributed.

### Hypothesis Test

Normality testing has also been carried out and the results are that the data are not normally distributed. According to Hayes (2021), Wilcoxon Test is a non-parametric test to analyze the significance of the difference between two paired data on an ordinal scale but not normally distributed. Therefore, according to the rules of non-parametric statistics, the test is carried out if the data is not normally distributed. To find out whether there is significance or not, the decision-making can be seen as follows:

- If the probability (Asymp. Sig)  $< 0.05$  then  $H_0$  is rejected, meaning that there is a difference. This shows that there is a significant effect on the difference in the treatment given to each variable.
- If the probability (Asymp. Sig)  $> 0.05$  then  $H_0$  is accepted, meaning that there is no difference. This shows that there is no significant effect on the difference in treatment given to each variable. The hypothesis test is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Wilcoxon test

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
<b>Post-test *</b>	<b>Negative Ranks</b>			
<b>Pre-test</b>		0 <sup>a</sup>	.00	.00
	<b>Positive Ranks</b>	30 <sup>b</sup>	15.50	465.00
	<b>Ties</b>	0 <sup>c</sup>		
	<b>Total</b>	30		

From the table above, negative ranks show no decrease in scores. Positive ranks show that the score of 30 students has increased. The ties show that there is no equal value between the pre-test and post-test. The data shows that students' scores increase after using Grammarly. The Wilcoxon Test statistics are presented in Table 6.



**Table 6.** Wilcoxon test statistics

	<b>Post-test - Pre-test</b>
<b>Z</b>	-4.787 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Based on the table above, it is known that Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000, which meant it is 0.05 smaller. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the null hypothesis can be rejected. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the results of the pre-test and post-test data and there is a significant effect of the use of Grammarly on the students' writing quality

## DISCUSSION

Based on the Curriculum 2013, the competency standards for English subjects are formulated based on oral actions (listening and speaking) and written actions (reading and writing). One of these competency standards is that students are expected to be able to write well. Some students at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu have difficulty in writing using correct grammar and writing mechanics. Therefore, the author introduces Grammarly as an online learning that helps students overcome their writing errors.

Grammarly is a good software to check students' writing errors. Fadhilah, et al. (2019) explained that Grammarly can detect right and wrong positions, as well as give an assessment of writing. Grammarly explains to students to correct mistakes in their writing, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

In this study, the author tested whether Grammarly was effective in improving the writing quality of students at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu. This study intends to make Grammarly an online learning tool or media that helps students write. The author examines the writing scores of class XI IPS 2 students before and after using the Grammarly application.

According to Fitria (2020), students may make mistakes when writing and completing an English sentence or essay in some aspects of writing such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. In this study, the writer finds the students' mistakes in writing explanation texts. Students' writing errors are in the form of grammatical and mechanical errors. Grammatical errors such as errors in using action verbs, linking verbs, pronouns, determiners, prepositions, and conjunction. Mechanical writing errors include 1) spelling errors in subject, verb, adjective, and noun; 2) punctuation errors in commas, periods, apostrophes, quotations, and question marks; 3) capital letters errors in the title and beginning of sentences.

Parra and Calero (2019) reported that students agreed that their English writing ability improved after using Grammarly. In this study, the student's scores showed an increase after receiving treatment using Grammarly. The mean of the students' pre-test was 63.3 with a fair category. Compared to the mean of the student's post-test was 82.76 which got the good category. The results show that there is a significant effect of using Grammarly as media for self-editing on the students' writing quality in eleventh grade at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu.

Several studies that have examined Grammarly have also obtained similar results. In a study by Rachmijati, et al. (2021), there were several students' writing errors and they were able to correct their writing errors using Grammarly. In the line with this, a study by Nova (2018), students can recognize spelling errors, study them, apply them, and be more careful in writing. In another study by Parra & Calero (2019), students' post-test writing scores increased significantly. Soegiyarto (2021) also found that Grammarly has helped students improve their English. Then, in a study by Pratama (2020), students believe that Grammarly improves their writing skills because Grammarly provides explanations.

This study revealed the advantages of Grammarly. First, it facilitates students to do self-editing skills. This skill is necessary for the students in developing their writing proficiency because they can not wait for their teacher's feedback all the time, nor rely on their peer feedback. In other words, this software has enabled teachers to facilitate students in independent learning. Students are given the opportunity to self-assess their writing and edit their writing errors using Grammarly. Halim, et al (2019) stated that Grammarly helps students become independent by making them aware of the benefits of using Grammarly when writing and motivating them to write better. In line with Ghufroon (2018), regular use of Grammarly improves students' language skills.

Then, the Grammarly software is an effective tool for speed in feedback. Grammarly is faster than checking with a teacher or self-editing without media. This is because accurate corrective feedback will require more teacher and student time. The teacher will be overwhelmed by checking all student papers and providing feedback. Otake (2021) stated that Grammarly feedback is quick and detects many local errors, so it can be utilized effectively in writing classes with many students.

But, this study found that Grammarly is sometimes inconsistent. There were some students' errors which are corrected by Grammarly which are still not correct. It can be seen from the student's explanation text, Ahmad Riduan, "Where do dad languages originate, and how are they different?" From this example, there is still a grammatical error after using Grammarly. The word "dad" fits the spelling and has meaning, but in this case, Grammarly doesn't change it to "did". This can be seen from another student, Tiara Sinthike, "How does a landslide happen??" From the example, there is an error in checking the punctuation that exceeds. The previous study by Pratama (2020) stated that Grammarly is sometimes inconsistent. Otake (2022) also revealed that students were confused about the feedback.

Although there is a weakness, it has been proven that Grammarly had a significant impact on the improvement of the writing ability of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Ujung Batu, Indonesia

## CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that Grammarly has been proven effective in improving students' writing quality in terms of their writing aspects such as spelling, mechanics, sentence structure, and writing accuracy. Following this finding, we would like to come up with some recommendations, especially for English teachers, students, and future researchers.

First, the results of this study are expected to contribute to teachers as an alternative English learning media. The Grammarly application is proven to help students quickly check grammatical and mechanical errors in their teaching. Using Grammarly as a medium for students' self-editing makes it easy for teachers to correct and provide feedback on students' writing errors.

Then, the students are expected to practice with Grammarly regularly. Through Grammarly checking by students, it is hoped that they can remember their writing mistakes, such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, structure, and style. It is expected that students can identify their writing errors correctly. Furthermore, this study also hopes that future researchers can be creative in making or developing research on Grammarly or with themes related to the media to check for writing errors.

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