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الأصالة
مجلة علمية محكمة

Technology – Mediated Feedback in EFL Writing: A Study of Grammarly Use among Libyan Undergraduates.

التكنولوجيا – التغذية الراجعة عبر الوسائط في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة
بين طلاب المرحلة «Grammarly» أجنبية: دراسة حول استخدام برنامج
الجامعة الليبية

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الملخص:

غالبًا ما تُعد الكفاءة في الكتابة أصعب مهام الكفاءة اللغوية، حيث تشكل أساسًا للعديد من مراحل التخطيط والتنظيم والصيغة؛ علاوة على ذلك، فهي تتطلب إتقانًا دقيقًا لقواعد النحو والمفردات، ومستوى من الدقة النحوية والهيكلية غالبًا ما يعجز المتعلمون عن بلوغه في بيئات الفصول الدراسية التقليدية. وعلى الرغم من أهميتها المطلقة، لا يزال متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يواجهون صعوبات في إنتاج نصوص مكتوبة دقيقة. في الفصول (AWE) ويهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف تأثير التقييم الآلي للكتابة و Zhang يدعم «Grammarly» الدراسة الليبية التقليدية، ولا سيما برنامج استخدام الأدوات الرقمية داخل الفصول الدراسية، مشيرين إلى أن (Hyland, 2019) المتعلمين الذين استخدموا التقييم الآلي للكتابة حققوا أداءً أفضل بكثير وأظهروا دقة نحوية، علاوة على ذلك، استخدموا مجموعة متنوعة من المفردات، مع تقديم نصوص منظمة جيدًا. اعتمدت الدراسة نهجًا مختلطًا. وقد تم استخدام عينات من الواجبات المكتوبة، ومقابلات شبه منظمة، واستبيان. وقد عزز تحليل البيانات التأثير الإيجابي على كل من الطلاب والمعلمين. وقد عززت (AWE) لأدوات التقييم الآلي للكتابة



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أداء الطلاب من خلال خلق بيئة مبتكرة وتقديم ملاحظات فورية؛ فهي Grammarly توفر المساعدة التي كانت تفتقر إليها الأساليب التقليدية، تحديثات الكتابة، AWE الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم الآلي للكتابة،

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BY

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Abstract

Writing proficiency is often the most challenging task of linguistic competence, underlying many stages of planning, organization, and drafting; moreover, it demands precise control of grammar and vocabulary, a level of grammatical and structural precision that frequently eludes learners in traditional classroom settings. Despite its absolute importance, EFL learners continue to struggle to produce accurate written passages. This research is set to explore the impact of Written Automated Evaluation (AWE) in traditional Libyan classrooms, particularly Grammarly. Zhang and Hyland (2019) support the utilization of digital tools within classrooms, noting that learners who employed AWE performed significantly better and demonstrated grammatical accuracy, and furthermore, used a varied range of vocabulary, while projecting well-organized texts. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach. Samples of written assignments, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire were used. The data analysis reinforced the beneficial impact of AWE tools on both students and teachers. Grammarly enhanced students' performance by creating an innovative environment and offering instant feedback; it offers the assistance that traditional methods lacked.

Keywords: Automated Written Evaluation, AWE, writing Challenges, Grammarly.

Introduction

In a globalized digital Era, students have to project their proficiency levels through writing an email, a report, or an assignment, as writing proficiency influences learners' academic performance and future professional opportunities (Ngo et al., 2024). Writing has always been the biggest game-changer for EFL learners, yet the hardest to develop and master. It transforms them from merely being passive learners to actively engaged, manifesting their own thoughts critically into an interwoven, linguistically precise piece of writing.

Instructors have always instilled a sense of frustration with teaching writing skills, Suteja and Setiawan (2022) explained. With heavy-tailored explanations, lack of materials, burdens of ongoing learned language, and time constraints, they had to go beyond traditional teaching methods and evolve into digitally equipped tools – Automated Writing Evolution to be precise. AWE has gained great prominence over the past decade, offering easily accessible solutions.

Underlining the power of AWE tools, Lui and Link et al. (2022) promote that AWE systems provide a click-of-a-button feedback on linguistic features like grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, which in turn would increase learners' awareness and facilitate successful revision processes on the long term. Tools like Grammarly offer readily accessible suggestions on surface-level errors, enabling learners to revise drafts independently and at their own pace.

Prior research has reported that EFL learners using Grammarly demonstrate improvements in accuracy, linguistic range, and revision quality (Zhai & Ma, 2023; Yamashita, 2024).

In contemplating the role of Automated Writing Evaluation, Datokarama (2025) had a collection of reviews of several studies that provided gains in surface-level mechanics (grammar/spelling) and Learner Autonomy; however, it was sadly noted that it limits writer metacognitive skills like logic and organization. Tusino et al. (2024), on the other hand, further pressed that by employing digital tools like Grammarly, it would facilitate the "Applying" and "Evaluating" stages of Bloom's Digital Taxonomy, fostering critical thinking during the editing process.

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There is a broad consensus among researchers regarding Grammarly's implication within undergraduate classrooms; Ghosh & Rahman (2023) refute that Grammarly's instant feedback promotes Metacognitive Practice, helping students internalize rules through an iterative "trial and error" process.

Most importantly, though, the question of whether it facilitates instructors or impairs their futuristic goals, Abd El Rasoul, Aboelwa, and Seddeek. (2023). explain that Grammarly bridges the gap left by delayed teacher feedback, empowering independent revision. Dincel & Saygi (2024) shed light on that matter by positing that higher-proficiency students use Grammarly for "Noticing the Gap" (critical reflection), whereas students with over-reliance would often opt to "click-to-accept" without full comprehension.

Research Questions:

1. Does Grammarly have an impact on undergraduates' writing performance compared to traditional methods?
2. What are the students' and teachers' attitudes toward using Grammarly as a writing tool?
3. What challenges do students face while using Grammarly?

Data Collection and Analysis

I. Procedures/ Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to investigate Grammarly's impact on Libyan undergraduates' writing performance in the University of Benghazi. Samples of written assignments were collected before and after Grammarly's usage. Samples contained a passage that students were asked to write about their childhood. Grammarly was used for 12 weeks duration, and samples of assignments were collected afterwards. Both pre- and post-samples were assessed by analytic rubrics to gain precise information. A questionnaire was distributed to 40 students – the questionnaire consisted of 10 items, which asked students to rate their level of agreement according to a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were conducted with random samples within a 15–20 minute period of timing. For data analysis, descriptive statistics offered a preliminary quantitative overview of Grammarly's efficacy. Meanwhile,

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thematic analysis was utilized to ensure rich qualitative data, following the guidelines by Naeem et al. (2023). This resulted in developing a comprehensive understanding of the data, coding, thematic identification, and review, ensuring a deep and nuanced understanding of digital pedagogical innovation compared to their traditional counterparts within Libyan undergraduate classes.

II. Participants

Benghazi University students majoring in English in both the Faculty of Education and the Languages Faculty. Students were in their 2nd and 3rd years participating in writing classes (Expository Essay and Academic Writing), and they projected B1 and B2 proficiency levels. The sample consisted of 19 males and 21 females.

III. Findings

To identify and collect students' perceptions of the use of Grammarly, a questionnaire was distributed to 40 students. To cultivate the proportion of responses for each question, the researchers employed a mathematical procedure for calculating percentages, which is outlined as follows.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage
F = Frequency
N = Number of samples
100% = Constant value

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1. The Grammarly application is extremely useful for me.	25 (59.5%)	17 (40.5%)	0	0
2. Grammarly helped me to overcome my	25 (59.5%)	17 (40.5%)	0	0

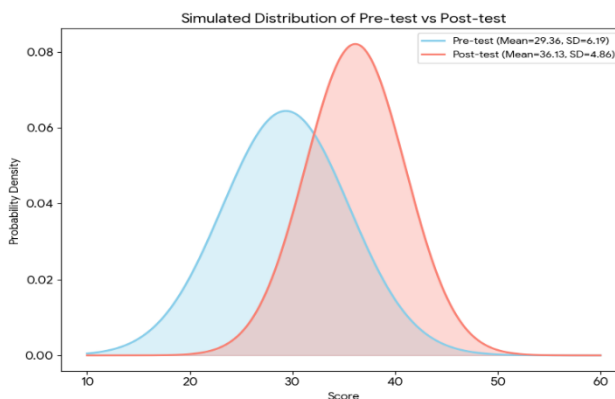
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grammatical mistakes				
3. Grammarly helped me with my word choice and paragraph organization	25 (59.5%)	17 (40.5%)	0	0
4. Grammarly improved my punctuation	25 (59.5%)	17 (40.5%)	0	0
5. Grammarly’s instant feedback helped me with my writings	22 (52.4%)	20 (47.6%)	0	0
6. Grammarly provided detailed feedback	13 (30.9%)	27 (64.3%)	2 (4.8%)	0
7. Grammarly’s free version isn’t as useful as the Paid one	6 (14.3%)	15 (35.7%)	20 (47.6%)	6 (14.3%)
8. I think it’s difficult to correct errors after being identified by the application	0	5 (11.9%)	27 (64.3%)	10 (23.8%)
9. I find Grammarly discouraging and a complete waste of my time	0	1 (2.4%)	32 (76.2%)	9 (21.4%)
10. I highly recommend using Grammarly	21 (50%)	20 (47.6%)	1 (2.4%)	0

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Another tool to obtain empirical data was employed: a pre-test and a post-test. A sample of 40 students was given a task to write about their childhood before using Grammarly and then assigned to use it for 12 weeks period. Both tasks specified a 200–300-word number. A post-test was conducted, and the results demonstrated significant improvement in their performance. The presented results indicate that the mean of the students’ performance in the pre-test is (29.36), while in the post test is (36.13). There are also significant statistical differences ($p = 0.00$). The following table will illustrate the findings.

Test	N	Mean	StD. Deviation	df	t	Sig.
Pre-test	20	29.36	6.19	29	25.96	.00
Post-test	20	36.13	4.86	29	40.64	.00



Another instrument to obtain valuable information was semi-structured interviews. 5 students were randomly selected. Questions were carefully conducted to cover the theoretical framework behind AWE implementation within undergraduate courses, namely Grammarly. The interviews capture student perceptions and attitudes. The table below will help to map how each student covered the most modern SLA theories.

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Category	Research Question	Interview Questions
Noticing	Did the student learn the rule?	"When Grammarly flags a mistake, do you usually read the 'See Meaning' explanation, or do you just click 'Correct'?"
ZPD	Is the tool a scaffold or a crutch?	"If you had to write a similar essay tomorrow without Grammarly, which mistakes do you think you would still make?"
Agency	Is the student in control?	"Have you ever disagreed with a Grammarly suggestion? Why did you decide to keep your original version?"
Anxiety	Affective filter impact?	"How does using the tool change your confidence when you start a new writing task?"

Student 1: The "Noticer" (Focus: Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis)

- **Response:** "Before I started using Grammarly, I used to always write 'I am looking forward to see you.' Grammarly flagged 'see' every single time and explained that it needs a gerund. After the fourth essay, I didn't need the red line anymore; I caught myself before I even typed it. I don't just click 'Correct'—I read the explanation because it helps me understand the *why* behind my habit." It shows that the application or AWE transitioned from a corrector to a **teacher**, moving the student from "input" to "intake."

Student 2: The "Scaffolded" Learner (Focus: Vygotsky's ZPD)

- **Response:** "Writing in English used to be very hard and frustrating. Grammarly brought some help. It handles the small things—like my missing articles (a/the)—so I don't waste my time and energy but rather focus on making sure my argument is strong. If I wrote tomorrow without it, I'd be slower, but I'd be more careful because I now know where my 'weak spots' are." It proves the **Cognitive Load Theory**. By offloading surface errors, the student can finally write at a higher level of composition.

Student 3: The "Agentic" Editor (Focus: Learner Agency)

- **Response:** "I actually don't pay attention to what Grammarly mostly suggests. Sometimes it wants me to be 'concise' by replacing an adjective, but I keep it because that word is important for the tone of my story. I feel like the 'boss' of the software, not the other way around." This provides that the student is no longer a passive user. They are developing **Linguistic Agency**, using the tool as a consultant rather than a crutch.

Student 4: The "Confident" Writer (Focus: Krashen's Affective Filter)

- **Response:** Before using Grammarly, writing was my biggest nightmare because I was so afraid to be the one recognized among my peers with the most grammar and vocabulary mistakes, so I tended to write in short, simple sentences. Now, I'm more open to complexity because I know I have a tool to get back to with an explanation. My writing has changed drastically ever since. I became more expressive. The question demonstrates a lowering of the **Affective Filter** (anxiety), which is crucial for language acquisition.

Student 5: The "Process" Strategist (Focus: Process Writing Theory)

- **Response:** "I used to write a draft and send it immediately. Now, I have a 'Grammarly Session' where I go through every highlight. It has turned my writing into a two-step process: creating and refining. It's made me a much more disciplined editor." It demonstrates the shift from **Product-oriented** writing to **Process-oriented** writing.

Conclusion

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This research aimed to investigate the impact Grammarly has on undergraduate students, and it is sufficient to say that both students and teachers hold positive feedback with the application. Several researches have been done to assess the impact Grammarly has on EFL learners, but little to none has been over Libyan students. Both the questionnaire and post-tests demonstrate that EFL learners tend to favor Grammarly as it provides instant feedback, lowers anxiety levels, encourages collaborative learning, and makes students more confident in their writing tasks. Moreover, students consider Grammarly as an effective tool for automated writing evaluation.

Grammarly helps students identify errors simpler and quicker; minimize mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and word choices; enhance paraphrasing skills; and improve summarizing skills. It did provide much more to the teaching writing process, with its many beneficial claims; the application falls short in explaining errors, word-order, and organization, which suggests that the application cannot substitute teacher-based instructions, but rather aids it. As with most classroom-based research, this study suffers from some limitations. For instance, data was collected from a single public university in Benghazi. As a result, it would be worthwhile to conduct research across different educational levels; more importantly, students have employed the free version of the app, which provides limited features.

Significance of this study

The findings of this study have a number of crucial pedagogical implications. First, it is crucial for the specialists in the field of education to take into account the supportive role of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning language in general and writing specifically, as it makes this process more engaging and interactive. An additional educational implication that can be drawn from the current study is that, to improve learning outcomes in writing, it is recommended that teachers become familiar with specific artificial intelligence tools as supplementary tools, such as Grammarly, used in the context of writing to more effectively guide students to ethically utilize these tools. Moreover, Grammarly helps students polish their writing by providing instant feedback on lower- order of skills such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. However, it should be used alongside teacher

guidance, which focuses on higher-order skills such as the development of argument and coherence, which AI tools lack to provide.

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