

GRAMMARLY AS A WRITING TOOL: IMPROVING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ESSAY WRITING

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ABSTRACT

As writing proficiency is essential for academic success, integrating technology such as Grammarly has gained attention as a potential tool for improving students' writing skills. This study investigates the impact of using Grammarly to enhance the writing quality of ninth-grade Junior High School students. This study used a pre-experimental design at a private junior high school in Sidoarjo. The sample included ICO ninth-grade students. The study used an essay writing test (pretest and posttest) as its research instrument. Since the normality test indicated non-normal data distribution, the Wilcoxon Rank Test was used to compare pretest and posttest scores. The Wilcoxon test yielded a two-tailed Asymp. Sig result of 0.000. Since this value is lower than 0.05, the findings support the hypothesis that Grammarly enhances students' writing quality. The findings from this study reveal a general improvement in students' writing skills across all five evaluated aspects: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics. This research also provides recommendations for teachers and students to consider integrating technology such as Grammarly in teaching writing to achieve better learning outcomes.

Keywords: Junior High School Students, Grammarly, Writing, Writing Quality

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill in mastering the English language, playing a crucial role in effective communication and academic success. Writing is the process of expressing ideas in a coherent and clear manner with the aim of effectively communicating messages to readers (Do, 2023). Moreover, Toba et. al., (2019) emphasize the significance of honing writing abilities for EFL students in Indonesia, as it is essential for communication through written English and for achieving academic goals such as writing essays, letters, articles, and journals. In today's fast-paced world, writing is becoming more important for high school students. By practicing different types and styles of writing, they improve their skills. From mastering the fundamentals to refining their technique, students undergo a comprehensive journey in perfecting their writing abilities. For instance, in the third grade, students are introduced to the foundational aspects of constructing sentences and forming coherent paragraphs or short essays.

According to Harmer (2006), good quality writing involves clarity, coherence, and appropriate use of language. Harmer emphasises the importance of well-organized and logically structured writing, which allows readers to follow the argument or narrative easily. He also highlights the necessity of understanding the audience and purpose of the writing, as these factors influence tone, style, and content. He states that excellent writing concerns "the correct and appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar, along with the ability to structure sentences and paragraphs in a way that makes the writing easy to read and understand". These principles help writers produce texts that are informative, engaging, and accessible to their intended readers. Research by Ohta et al. (2018) identified six important traits that affect the quality of writing: content and ideas, organization, sentence fluency, voice, vocabulary, and conventions. When judging writing quality, raters often focus on how well the ideas are organized and developed. Jacobs et al. (1981) support this view in their writing rubric, which uses specific scales to evaluate these traits. This type of assessment, known as holistic assessment, centers on the writers' intended meaning and how well it is conveyed in the composition. They emphasized that clear and understandable writing compositions play a crucial role in defining writing quality especially in narrative text.

Among various text types, narrative writing holds particular importance due to its role in developing students' creativity and expression. According to Suhartini (2016), narrative text tells a story about one or more characters who face challenges and find solutions. It shows how people react to their experiences and explores social and cultural values. This type of writing entertains readers or listeners. The main objectives of a narrative are to captivate and engage the audience, convey a meaningful message, and delve into social and moral themes. Additionally, narratives aim to entertain and sustain the interest of the reader or listener. Kartika (2017) also said that Narrative texts are a form of writing that can be either imaginative or factual. They encompass a wide range of genres. These narratives often transport readers to different worlds and allow them to experience a variety of emotions and adventures through the characters and plots. Derewianka & Jones (2016) stated that the generic structure of narrative text is orientation, complication, and resolution. Starting with the orientation where the setting, characters, and atmosphere are introduced. This sets the stage for the sequence of events that drive the story forward. As the narrative unfolds, a complication or problem arises, leading to a climax. Finally, the resolution brings closure to the story, determining whether the outcome is positive or negative.

Despite the importance of writing, many junior high school students in Indonesia face challenges in writing effectively. This can be proven by the number of Indonesian learners who make many mistakes in writing such as grammatical errors, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation. Fitria (2020) stated that language learners usually make mistakes in certain points such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation when they write sentences, paragraphs, or essays. Another research by Anh (2019) also found that the main problems that learners face when doing writing are the lack of knowledge of vocabulary, and grammar, and insufficiency in writing skill strategies. These obstacles are caused by some factors such as learning materials, teaching methods, and the learners' motivations. Similar situations have been observed by Huda & Wuda (2019) revealed that One of the most common errors made by learners is misinformation, which can be attributed to the interference of their mother tongue with their learning. For example, learners often struggle with converting verbs into past participles, a type of intra-language error resulting from a lack of understanding of how to use and modify verbs. The occurrence of this error is affected by multiple factors,

including learning environments, teaching and learning methods, learning styles and feedback, access to learning resources, and motivation levels.

Given these challenges, integrating technology in writing instruction has gained attention as a potential solution. It is important to incorporate technology in the educational and instructional process, particularly in language education, as the integration of technology has facilitated new developments in language teaching and evaluation (Parra & Calero, 2019). English language skills can be learned and mastered easily when using technology in the learning and teaching process, for example, games, videos, online learning platforms, YouTube, and others (Gilakjani, 2017). Utilizing technology can assist learners in identifying and correcting spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar errors in their writing is necessary. By doing so, learners can improve their language skills and produce high-quality content. One such tool, Grammarly, assists learners in identifying and correcting common writing errors.

Grammarly is one of the platforms which is an extremely useful online proofreading tool which helps reduce errors in writing related to vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018). Two versions of Grammarly are available: the free and business versions. This powerful digital writing tool is capable of analyzing text for duplicate content, errors in grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and language style (Barrot, 2022). Making it an indispensable tool for writers who want to produce high-quality content. Furthermore, Daroina et al (2022) explain that Grammarly also suggests the most appropriate word and can identify possible misspellings, providing several alternatives for users to choose from. Grammarly not only identifies errors but also provides suggestions for corrections, making it an incredibly useful tool for learners and writers alike (Hadiat, 2022).

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of Grammarly in enhancing writing skills. A study by Fahmi & Rachmijati (2021) revealed that using Grammarly can improve a learner's writing skills and help in articulating their thoughts and feelings. Learners should feel confident in sharing their ideas in writing. They can use this application to find and correct any mistakes in their work. Similarly, a study conducted by Jelita et al. (2023) investigated how Grammarly influences the writing quality of students in the eleventh grade. The research analyzed the learners' grammatical accuracy, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. The findings indicated that Grammarly contributed to substantial improvements in students' writing skills. However, the study also identified certain areas that required further enhancement. Further supporting this, Syapitri et al. (2023) conducted research on the implementation of Grammarly among second-grade junior high school students. The research aimed to determine whether the use of Grammarly could improve the writing skills of students by reducing grammatical errors in their texts or essays. The research involved a group of students who received Grammarly and another group who did not. The researchers evaluated the results and found that learners using Grammarly significantly improved their writing skills. Students who used Grammarly made fewer grammatical errors in their writing, which led to better writing overall. This research shows that Grammarly can effectively help improve writing skills for junior high school students.

While previous research has explored Grammarly's effectiveness, limited studies have focused on its impact on junior high school students. Additionally, research investigating the effectiveness of the free version of Grammarly in improving specific writing components such as grammar usage and mechanics remains scarce. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether using Grammarly can enhance the writing quality of third-grade junior

high school students, particularly in reducing grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and punctuation errors.

B. METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach to investigate the relationships between variables and to test established theories. A Pre-Experimental design, specifically the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This design involved a single group without a control group, where a pretest assessed participants' baseline skills before the treatment, followed by a posttest to measure outcome changes, aligning with Fraenkel & Wallen's (2019) guidelines on within-subjects design. This study involved 25 ninth-grade students from an ICO class at a private junior high school in Sidoarjo during the 2023/2024 academic year. The school categorizes students into three programs: ICO (International Class Orientation), Excellent, and Tahfid. Due to limitations in available research subjects, this study employed a pre-experimental design. There were only two ICO classes, and the researcher could use only one for the experimental intervention, while the other helped verify the reliability of the findings. By focusing on a single class, the study aimed to assess the effectiveness of Grammarly in improving writing quality.

Data were collected through the pre-test and post-test results, providing a basis for evaluating students' writing development. To assess students' narrative writing proficiency, this study employed a writing test based on Jacob's ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs, 1981), which evaluates five categories with a total score of 100. The test was administered in two stages: a pre-test conducted before the treatment to assess students' initial writing ability and a post-test given after the treatment to measure improvements. The treatment involved the use of Grammarly as a writing tool, allowing students to revise and enhance their narrative texts based on the application's feedback. The scores were analyzed by comparing the pre-test and post-test results to determine the extent of improvement in students' writing proficiency. Statistical analysis was employed to measure the significance of the changes observed, ensuring an objective assessment of Grammarly's effectiveness in enhancing narrative writing skills.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Results of Pre-test and Post-test

To evaluate the effectiveness of Grammarly in enhancing students' narrative writing proficiency, this study compared students' writing performance before and after the intervention. The assessment focused on five key writing components: Content (C), Organization (O), Vocabulary (V), Language Use (L), and Mechanics (M). The pre-test was conducted to establish students' baseline writing abilities, while the post-test was administered after the intervention to measure progress. The following table presents a comparison of students' scores in both tests, illustrating the improvements observed across all writing components.

Table 1. The Students' Scores

No	Name	Score											
		Pre-Test						Post-Test					
		C	O	V	L	M	Total	C	V	O	L	M	Total
1	AIB	20	13	14	17	2	66	26	18	17	20	4	85
2	FDS	26	17	18	18	3	82	26	17	19	22	5	89
3	GSP	23	16	17	16	3	75	25	17	18	20	4	84
4	KBM	25	15	17	16	3	76	25	18	18	22	4	87
5	MHE	21	13	16	17	3	70	21	14	18	20	4	77
6	MFA	27	18	18	18	4	85	27	18	18	22	4	89
7	MNF	28	18	17	18	4	85	28	18	17	23	5	91
8	MEP	23	13	17	17	3	73	23	13	18	20	3	77
9	MRM	28	18	18	20	4	88	28	18	18	23	4	91
10	MZA	27	18	16	18	4	83	27	18	18	20	5	88
11	SAD	23	16	16	18	3	76	23	16	17	22	3	81
12	SIA	22	13	16	19	3	73	22	13	17	20	3	75
13	ZHA	27	18	17	20	4	86	27	18	18	23	5	91
14	APH	27	18	15	17	4	81	27	18	17	21	5	88
15	AAA	25	15	17	20	3	80	25	15	18	22	4	84
16	AKP	23	16	17	18	3	77	23	16	18	20	4	81
17	BND	27	19	17	18	4	85	27	19	18	22	5	91
18	EM	27	18	17	19	4	85	27	19	18	22	5	91
19	FAP	23	13	16	17	3	72	23	13	17	20	4	77
20	GDK	22	14	16	18	3	73	22	14	16	20	3	75
21	JEU	27	18	17	20	4	86	27	18	18	23	5	91
22	NDH	22	16	18	17	4	77	22	16	18	21	5	82
23	UF	26	17	17	16	4	80	26	17	18	22	4	87
24	SK	27	18	17	20	4	86	27	18	18	23	4	90
25	VNK	22	17	18	17	4	78	26	18	18	22	5	89
Average		24,72	16,2	6,76	17,96	3,48	79,12	5,2	6,68	17,72	21,4	4,24	85,24

The research findings address the previously stated research questions. These findings are based on the analysis of students' scores from both the pre-test and post-test assessments. The data were analyzed and categorized to provide a detailed breakdown of the findings. The chart above display the outcomes of the pre-test and post-test used to assess students' narrative writing skills. Based on the analysis of the pre-test results, some students were found to experience difficulties. The mechanical aspect includes the basic elements of writing such as spelling, punctuation, and writing format. Following the analysis of the pre-test results, it was evident that students encountered writing errors primarily in the realms of grammar and mechanics. Specifically, grammatical mistakes encompassed inaccuracies in the usage of action verbs, past participles, linking verbs, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions. Meanwhile, mechanical writing errors manifested in misspelt verbs, adjectives, and nouns, as well as punctuation inconsistencies involving commas, periods, quotation marks, and question marks, in addition to errors in the capitalization of titles, proper nouns, and sentence beginnings. Furthermore, a number of students faced challenges in organizing their ideas cohesively and systematically, often resulting in a lack of logical flow. These findings are consistent with Fitria (2020), who found that students frequently make errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar when writing in English. Similarly, Huda & Wuda (2019) identified misinformation errors as a common challenge for learners, often influenced by mother tongue interference.

In addition, table 1 also revealed that the pre-test revealed scores ranging from 66 to 88, with 66 being the lowest and 88 the highest. Meanwhile, scores in the post-test varied from 75 to 91, with 75 as the lowest and 91 as the highest. Moreover, the data also showed that the average total score increased from 79.12 in the pre-test to 85.24 in the post-test, indicating that the use of Grammarly had a positive impact on students' narrative writing proficiency. This indicates an overall improvement in students' writing proficiency. The increase in scores suggests that the intervention had a positive impact on students' narrative writing abilities.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test

To determine whether there was a significant improvement in students' writing performance after using Grammarly, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was conducted. This non-parametric test was chosen because it is suitable for comparing paired data, specifically pre-test and post-test scores. Table 2 presents the test statistics, which indicate whether the differences observed between the two assessments are statistically significant.

Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
Test Statistics

	post test - pre test
Z	-4.386 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

The results indicate that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This finding suggests a statistically significant improvement in students' writing performance after using Grammarly. This indicates that Grammarly plays a crucial role in enhancing students' narrative writing by helping them identify and correct grammatical errors, construct clearer sentences, and refine their spelling and punctuation. The findings of this study align with those of Fahmi & Rachmijati (2021), who also found that Grammarly significantly improved students' writing performance. Their study demonstrated that students initially struggled with writing but showed notable improvement after using Grammarly, particularly in grammar and sentence construction.

Students' Improvement in Writing Assessment Aspects

To evaluate the impact of Grammarly on students' writing performance, five key components of writing were analyzed: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics. The percentage improvement for each aspect was calculated to identify the areas where students demonstrated the most progress. The following figure presents a comparison of pre-test and post-test results across these five writing components, highlighting the overall improvement in students' writing proficiency.

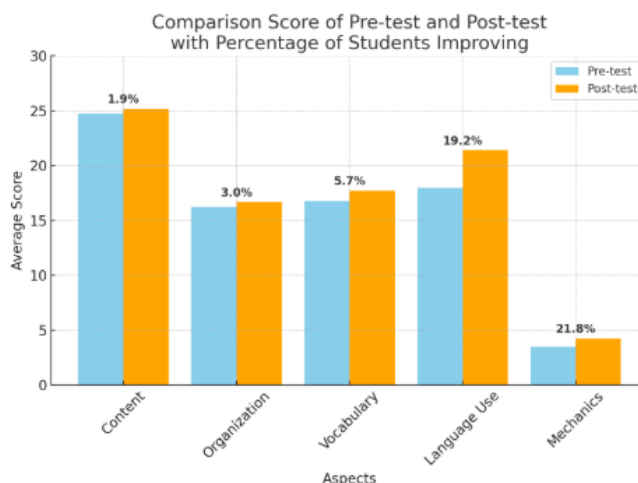


Figure 1. The Comparison of Pre-test and post-test

The evaluation focused on these five key components. The percentage improvement for each aspect was calculated to determine the most significant area of progress.

1. Content: The pre-test score for Content was 24.72, which increased to 25.2 in the post-test, reflecting a 1.94% improvement. This indicates a slight enhancement in students' ability to develop and elaborate on their ideas effectively.
2. Organization: The pre-test score was 16.2, rising to 16.68 in the post-test, resulting in a 3.0% improvement. This suggests that students made minor progress in structuring their writing more coherently and logically.
3. Vocabulary: The vocabulary aspect showed a notable increase from 16.76 in the pre-test to 17.72 in the post-test, representing a 5.7% improvement. This indicates an expansion of students' word choices and more precise language usage.
4. Language Use: Among all aspects, Language Use exhibited one of the highest improvements. The pre-test score of 17.96 increased significantly to 21.4, achieving a 19.2% improvement. This suggests that students made substantial progress in grammar, sentence structure, and overall linguistic accuracy.
5. Mechanics: Despite having the lowest initial score, Mechanics showed the highest percentage improvement among all aspects. The score increased from 3.48 to 4.24, reflecting a 21.8% improvement. This suggests that students significantly enhanced their accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Overall, the findings indicate that while all aspects of writing improved, the most substantial progress was observed in Language Use and Mechanics. This suggests that students benefited the most in terms of grammatical accuracy and technical writing skills. However, areas such as Content and Organization showed only slight improvements, indicating a need for further focus on idea development and coherence in writing. These insights can help educators tailor future writing instruction to address weaker areas while reinforcing strengths. Moreover, the implementation of Grammarly as corrective feedback in students' writing resulted in a significant improvement in multiple aspects of assessment, as evidenced by the post-test results. The findings of this study align with those of Jelita et al. (2023) and Syapitri et al. (2023), both of which highlight Grammarly's effectiveness in improving students' writing skills. Using a pre-experimental design and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, these studies demonstrated significant improvements in writing quality across different educational levels. Students exposed to Grammarly achieved higher scores, showing notable

enhancements in content, vocabulary, grammar, and writing mechanics. The results reinforce Grammarly's role in reducing writing difficulties and enhancing overall writing proficiency.

From the explanations above, using Grammarly can significantly improve the quality of students' writing in narrative texts. With the help of Grammarly, students can correct grammatical errors, construct sentences better, and ensure that their spelling and punctuation usage is correct. This tool not only helps students correct their mistakes but also provides direct learning through the suggestions provided, so that students can understand and internalize the rules of good writing. Thus, Grammarly becomes an effective tool in helping students develop their writing skills, producing more coherent, engaging and professional narrative texts. Additionally, this research highlights that Grammarly not only enhances students' grammar but also supports improvements in content development, organization, and vocabulary. Even with the free version, students benefit from automated feedback that helps refine their ideas, structure their essays more effectively, and expand their word choices. By providing real-time suggestions on clarity, coherence, and conciseness, Grammarly serves as a comprehensive writing tool that supports multiple aspects of writing proficiency beyond grammar correction

D. CONCLUSION

This study investigates the impact of using Grammarly to enhance the writing quality of ninth-grade junior high school students. The findings from this study reveal an overall improvement in students' writing performance across five evaluated aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Content demonstrated a slight increase of 1.94%, indicating marginal progress in idea development. Organization improved by 3.0%, suggesting minor advancements in coherence and logical structure. Vocabulary showed a more noticeable improvement of 5.7%, reflecting expanded word choices and more precise language use. The most significant progress was observed in Language Use (19.2%) and Mechanics (21.8%), highlighting students' enhanced grammatical accuracy, sentence construction, and technical writing skills. These findings suggest that Grammarly is particularly effective in improving technical aspects of writing, though further emphasis on idea development and structural coherence remains necessary. By integrating Grammarly into writing instruction, educators can provide students with real-time feedback that enhances both conceptual and technical writing skills. This study reinforces the potential of AI-assisted writing tools to support students' writing development, making them more independent and proficient writers.

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