

## Students' Perspective and Experiences of Using Grammarly in Writing Thesis Backgrounds

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### ABSTRACT

Writing the background section of a thesis could be a challenge for final-year students, especially when it comes to using correct grammar and constructing a logical flow. Grammarly, a widely used grammar checking tool, is often relied upon to improve writing quality. This study aims to find out English Education students' perspectives and experiences of using Grammarly to help them write their thesis background. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six final-year students who had used the free version of Grammarly. The findings revealed that Grammarly effectively detects basic grammatical errors such as tenses, punctuation, and article usage, and increases students' writing confidence. However, limitations include feature restrictions, dependency on internet access, and occasional inaccuracy in feedback. Students found Grammarly helpful as a preparatory tool, but acknowledged it cannot replace supervisor feedback. In conclusion, Grammarly supports grammar correction and confidence-building but should be used as a complementary, not a substitute, academic writing aid.

**Keywords:** *Grammarly, Academic Writing, Grammar Accuracy, Thesis Background, Education Tool.*

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### INTRODUCTION

In the academic world, students are required to produce writing that is not only meaningful but also adheres to the language standards of academic writing, especially at the university level (Kaharuddin, 2018). Among the academic writing tasks, final-year students must complete a thesis as a requirement for graduation (Haris et al., 2023). Research conducted by Ghani et al, (2023) emphasizes that producing work that meets academic standards is one of the most crucial requirements for graduation. The background section of the thesis is one of the most important components, and can affect the quality of the academic work as a whole (Muspawi et al., 2023).

Despite this, many students find various difficulties when writing the background section (Susetyo & Noermanzah, 2020). In addition, many students face difficulties in creating a logical and easy-to-understand background. This has an impact on the overall quality of the scientific work (Susmita, 2022). One example is Darmalaksana (2024) research, which found that the background section is the most difficult part to write in scientific articles. Moreover, this finding supports the belief that this section is considered the most difficult because it has an opening paragraph that serves to lead the reader to the formulation of the main problem. Furthermore, Susmita (2022) explains that background writing can be affected by ineffective sentences in the background of scientific work (thesis) related to structure, economy, parallelism, logic, firmness, accuracy, and brevity. This applies to all students, especially students in English study programs. Students do not master the conventions of academic writing in English, especially in logical structure and grammar, which are crucial for creating a strong thesis background. These issues reflect a wider problem. Language accuracy, proper grammar, and consistent sentence structure

should be of concern to students. Writing that contains errors in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure can weaken the validity of scientific work and have a negative impact on academic achievement (Samuel et al., 2024). Grammar is seen by English language learners as an important part of the language, especially in writing. They also believe that grammar is a part of language, which is very important to create understandable sentences (Putra et al., 2021). These factors contribute to the low academic writing created by students in the final semester (Akbar, 2023).

In addition, students in the last semester have difficult problems and need the latest technical support (Saputro et al., 2024). Because almost all human work is checked by current technology (Rasyiid et al., 2021). This means that digital tools are essential to help students improve their writing skills (Haris et al., 2023). That's why Technology development plays a very important role here. Technology is essential in our lives as it helps us focus and understand how the world works (Carpio & Santos, 2022). In addition, technology can offer a variety of creative solutions to help with the academic writing process (Maulina et al., 2022; Harahap et al., 2024). With the rapid development of technology, various programs have been created to help students improve their language skills (Chairunnisa, 2024). Grammarly is a very popular digital assistant tool that tracks the use of verb phrases, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. As a digital assistant, Grammarly finds writing errors and suggests how to correct appropriate and better language styles (Astuti et al., 2023). Students and researchers often use this tool to ensure their writing meets academic standards. Grammarly is described as a promising tool to help students with early-stage academic writing. However, not many people have examined its role and limitations in helping students compose high-quality thesis backgrounds.

There are a number of studies that address this research. The initial study Driane et al. (2024) looked at how students felt when they used the Premium Grammarly to help with their thesis. This study also looked at seven students who used this software while writing their theses. The results show that this program offers significant advantages to EFL students, as it allows them to correct their grammar mistakes quickly and easily. Their positive experiences show how useful Grammarly is in improving the overall quality of students' writing. A further study (Hasan et al., 2021) looked at the electronic feedback provided by the Grammarly app when university students were writing an English thesis. They also looked at lecturers' perspectives and experiences of using the app as electronic feedback when students were writing an English thesis. The conclusion of the investigation results showed that the feedback provided covered a wide range of errors in the whole text, especially in the aspect of spelling, followed by errors in grammar. In addition, the feedback also highlighted the use of punctuation as well as capitalization in the thesis document. The results showed that this targeted feedback can help lecturers concentrate on the most difficult topics.

According to research conducted by Setyani et al. (2023), students' confidence in writing a thesis is influenced by Grammarly. The data for this study were taken from thesis drafts that had been evaluated and amended, and included the types of errors made by the participants. This study looked at how the students viewed the involvement of Grammarly and how it affected their confidence in writing. The research found that the students had positive attitudes and emotions after using this software, increasing their confidence in writing a thesis. The previous explanation shows that previous studies indicate that grammar checking software is mostly used as a grammar checking tool. However, not many studies have examined how final-year students view their role as initial aid in writing the background section of their thesis, especially before consulting with their supervisor. In addition, it is not yet known how dependent students are on this tool, despite the limitations of the free version.

Based on the explanation above, it is known that previous studies have shown that Grammarly is used mostly as a grammar checking tool, without studying how final year students perspectives it as a preliminary writing aid before drafting a thesis background, before consulting with a supervisor. In addition, not many studies have studied how

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students' perspectives on Grammarly as a preliminary writing aid before writing a thesis background, or how dependence on this technology amid the limited features in the free version. This study uses perspective as “an individual's unique way of viewing and interpreting their experiences, shaped by their beliefs, prior knowledge, and learning environment” to build a clearer theoretical foundation, as explained by Moon (2007) research. In this context, students' perspectives encompass not only what they like but also how they evaluate, respond to, and reflect on Grammarly's role in academic writing. Understanding this perspective is crucial because it provides insight into how digital tools like Grammarly influence writing habits, decision-making processes, and perceptions of the tool's benefits or drawbacks when writing a thesis.

Therefore, this study aims to find out how the perspective and experiences of final year students of the English Education Study Program use Grammarly to correct grammatical errors in writing a thesis background. In addition, this study will investigate the types of errors that occur most frequently, students' perspectives on the suggestions provided, how accurate and relevant they are, the limitations and challenges experienced by final-year students while using Grammarly, and students' overall perspectives of using Grammarly in the background section.

## METHOD

The researchers designed this study using a descriptive qualitative method. This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the types of errors frequently identified by Grammarly, students' responses to the suggestions provided, and the limitations and challenges faced by Grammarly. This study also aims to describe the overall perspectives and experiences of final-year students in using Grammarly to help write the background section of their theses. Six final-year students who were writing their theses and had previously used Grammarly participated in semi-structured interviews to collect data. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with all six respondents, and the researchers conducted additional interviews with the same three respondents online using WhatsApp. This was because the researchers needed to ensure a deeper understanding of the students' perspectives. The interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and were recorded so that the researchers could capture all the information without missing anything. For each respondent, the researchers asked 17 semi-structured questions to explore their perspectives and experiences in greater depth. The interview guide was adapted from (Cavaleri, 2016) and (Rababah & Talafha, 2024), which focused on the use of Grammarly as a tool to assist in writing the background section of a thesis. Some questions were modified to account for the specific difficulties faced by final-year students in academic writing.

After data collection, analysis was conducted using Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA), proposed by Northcutt & McCoy (2011). Interactive Qualitative Analysis is a structured approach based on systems theory that aims to provide an overview of respondents' experiences through thematic categories (called affinities) and analyze the relationships between them. This allows researchers to create visual representations of respondents' mental models. This systematic method, based on systems theory, aims to display participants' perspectives in the form of thematic elements (proximities) and their relationships with one another. Furthermore, the analysis consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

First, the researchers transcribed the recordings of semi-structured interviews. Next, the transcripts were thoroughly reviewed to find important points related to the respondents' experiences. The IQA method classified similar responses into main thematic categories (affinities). These categories were then labeled with the most relevant labels based on their meaning. The first labels included: Types of Errors Commonly Identified by Grammarly, Student Responses to Grammarly Feedback, Student Experiences: Challenges and Limitations of Using Grammarly, and Students' General Perspectives on Using Grammarly. Then, for the data display section, the System Influence Diagram (SID) table is

used to show the directed relationships between themes during the data display stage. This shows which themes influence other themes. Respondents' perspectives patterns can be better understood through this visualization. Finally, in the conclusion and verification stage, the researchers interpreted the relationships between the themes to determine how final-year English Education students viewed the use of Grammarly as the basis for their theses. This includes identifying the types of errors that occur most frequently, students' perspectives on the suggestions provided, how accurate and relevant they are, the limitations and challenges experienced by final-year students while using Grammarly, and students' overall perspectives of using Grammarly in the background section.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of interviews conducted with six final-year students of the English Language Education Study Program, using a semi-structured method, are presented in this section. This data shows the students' real experiences, their views, and their reflections when using Grammarly to support their thesis background. These results are organized thematically to emphasize recurring patterns, responses, and challenges. These themes are developed based on participants' direct statements and supported by illustrative quotes. Starting with the most frequently identified grammar errors by Grammarly, the presentation of findings continues with students' responses to Grammarly feedback, their experiences with the tool's limitations and challenges, and their overall perspective on its usefulness.

### **Types of Errors Frequently Identified by Grammarly**

The question asked, "How many mistakes did you make during background writing after using Grammarly. What kind of grammar mistakes are frequent?" In this question, the respondents revealed that the use of Grammarly found many errors that were often detected during the background writing of the thesis. The following are excerpts of interviews related to errors that were often detected during the writing of the background section of the thesis by the respondent (SA):

*"Quite a lot, mistakes such as word choice and sometimes the use of verbs that are often incorrect. For example, the use of plural words in sentences, I often make mistakes there."*- SA

Respondents (RS) and (PRN) also added that the mistakes that often occur when he writes the background part are punctuation, spelling errors and word choice:

*"...The most common grammatical error that occurs to me when using Grammarly is punctuation errors and spelling..."*- RS

*"Usually, the mistakes I often make are in punctuation, but there are also some in word choice"*- PRN

The researchers used the respondents' answers to create a diagram showing the types of these errors, which visually divides the most common grammar issues into categories. These categories include word choice, punctuation, use of tenses, and subject-verb agreement.

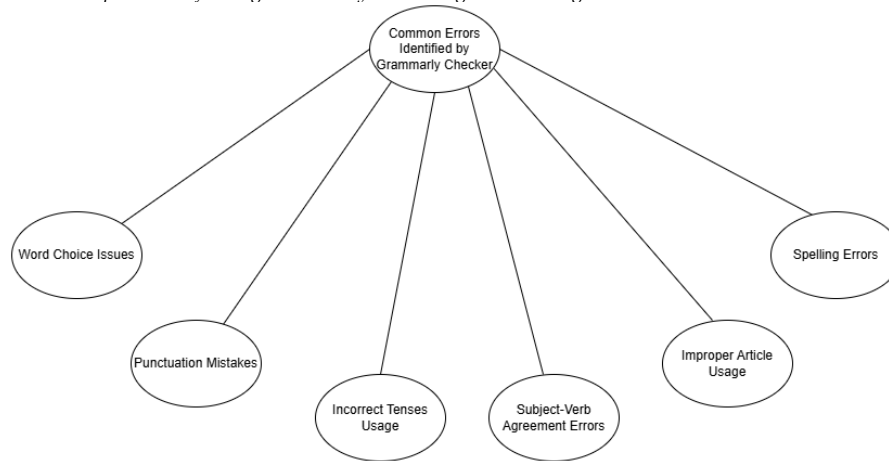


Figure 1. Types of Errors Frequently Identified by Grammarly

### Students' Responses to Grammarly Feedback

The question for this section is "Based on your experience, how accurate are the grammar corrections and suggestions provided by Grammarly in writing the background of the thesis?" In this section, respondents provided two responses regarding their use of Grammarly

#### *The initial perspectives when using the Grammarly for the first time*

Respondents said that Grammarly is useful and helpful, especially for identifying technical grammar issues such as punctuation. They also said that Grammarly serves as a tool for checking grammar before meeting with their supervisors. The following are interview excerpts from respondents (M) and (SA):

*"I felt the ease that the first time I felt it, and the mistakes were immediately detected, especially my punctuation marks." - M*

*"I use it every time I want to do my thesis, especially when I want to get close to the guidance to ensure the correctness and accuracy of the grammar." - SA*

#### *The experience of the respondents after applying it in the thesis background section*

Some respondents said that Grammarly provided inaccurate or irrelevant recommendations, especially in terms of complex sentence structure. They also said that some corrections changed the intended meaning, which led them to often choose not to accept all recommendations. The following are excerpts from interviews with respondents (AW) and (SA):

*"... there were some corrected sentences, but they didn't match with other sentences... it only corrected in one sentence..." - AW*

*"I have, such as the use of plural words. For example, when I wrote "researcher," it should have been correct, but when corrected by Grammarly, it became "researchers," and it was not appropriate for my research because "researchers" means that many people are researching, while this is only one person researching." - SA*

From the interview excerpts above, the researchers have created a diagram outlining two main perspectives to illustrate these reactions clearly. This diagram helps to compare and show how students' perspectives changed over time.

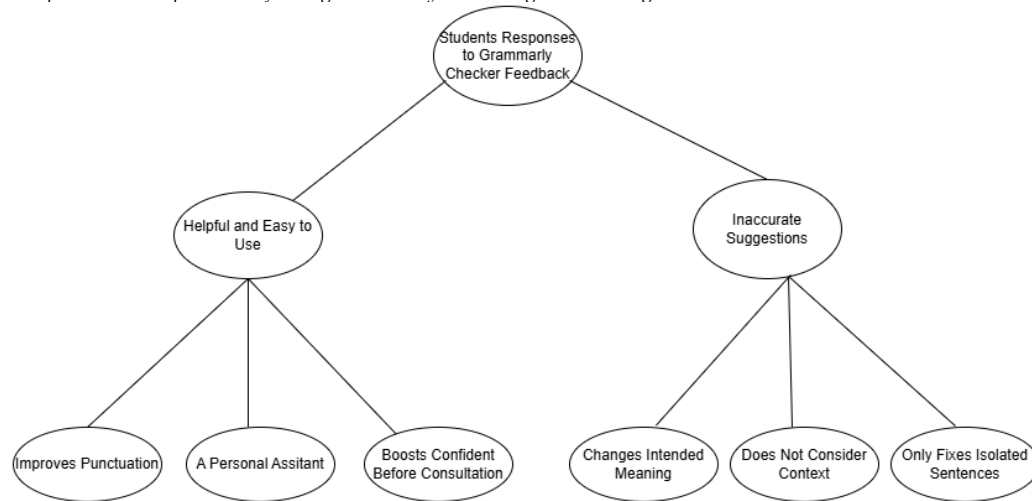


Figure 2. Students' Responses to Grammarly Feedback

### Students' Experiences: Limitations and Challenges of Using Grammarly

In this section, respondents share their experiences using Grammarly when writing their thesis background. This section discusses technical limitations, usage issues, dependence on the application, and their thoughts on how to solve these problems. This section provides a deeper understanding of how final-year students use Grammarly as a writing tool by learning more about their experiences.

#### Limitations

The question asked, "What are the limitations or shortcomings of Grammarly that you encountered while using it for thesis background checks? How did you overcome them?". In this section, the respondents agreed that the limitations they felt when using Grammarly while writing the background of their thesis were due to the use of the non-premium version. The following is an excerpt from the interview conducted by the respondent (AW) and (RE):

*"Yes, that's the only weakness, because I use the free one and don't use the premium one, so everything is limited." - AW*

*"...The limitation of using Grammarly is that many features are very important but only for premium users, for that I sometimes only use it as needed..." - RE*

Some respondents noted that, in addition to these feature-based limitations, Grammarly requires a stable internet connection to operate. This was explicitly expressed by respondents (AW) and (PRN):

*"... If I want to use it, my internet network must be good because if, for example, the network is not good, I can't use it..." - AW*

*"Perhaps because it always requires an internet connection, and if the internet connection is poor, it is difficult to use..." - PRN*

#### Challenges

Respondents reported practical and technical issues when using Grammarly to write the background section of their thesis. The main issue was inaccuracy in correcting complex sentence structures, which often required students to revise manually. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a respondent (SA):

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*"I don't think it's as accurate as it could be; there are just some things like this word doesn't need to be changed, but it's changed by Grammarly, and punctuation is also sometimes inaccurate." - SA*

However, some respondents still rely on Grammarly to find grammatical errors that they may not be aware of. The following are excerpts from the interviews conducted by (AW) and (M):

*"... I am very dependent on Grammarly because my major is English, so the accuracy of Grammar must be considered..." - AW*

*"I am very dependent, especially since we are majoring in English education, where grammar must be correct, so every time we have an assignment, I have to check first on Grammarly whether this is wrong or right, so I am very dependent." - M*

In addition, respondents were asked to determine whether Grammarly could replace the role of lecturers in checking thesis grammar. Most respondents disagreed with this idea. The following are excerpts from interviews with respondents (PRN) and (RS):

*"Not 100 percent, there are even those who, according to Grammarly, use this word but according to the lecturer, it turns out to be less precise". -PRN*

*"...No, I don't agree. I think you know that Grammarly was created to facilitate student activities in checking grammatical errors and not to replace the role of humans, especially lecturers, in checking grammatical errors in the thesis." - RS*

The researchers provided illustrative diagrams related to their findings on limitations and challenges based on the results of interviews conducted with respondents. This diagram shows the relationship between various perceived technical challenges, dependence on the application, limitations of the free version features, and awareness of the important role of lecturers as academic assistants.

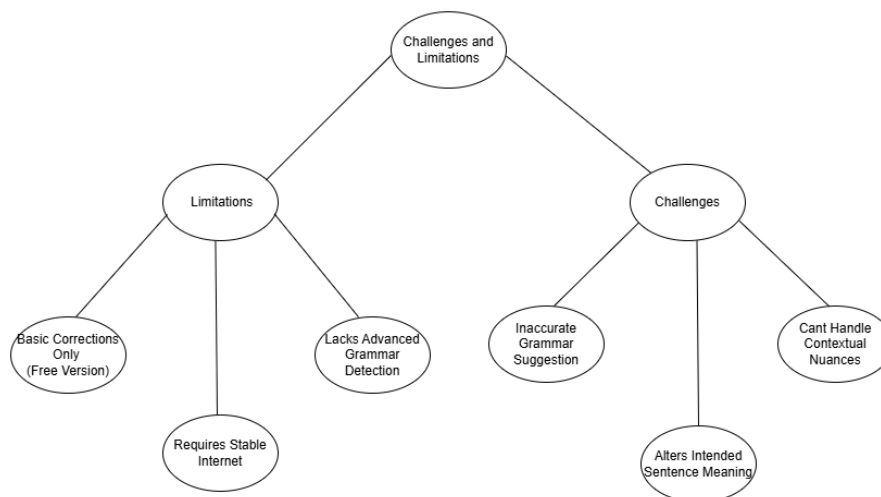


Figure 3. Challenges and Limitations of Using Grammarly

### Students' Overall Perspectives on the Use of Grammarly

One of the questions asked in this section was "Do you think Grammarly helps you get better results in your background writing". In response to this question, respondents stated that they greatly appreciated and critically recognized the use of Grammarly during the writing process of the background section of their thesis. Respondents positively stated that this software helped them organize the background section of their thesis, which they considered to be the most difficult part of the thesis. It was reported that Grammarly helped achieve grammatical consistency and improve grammatical accuracy. This was explicitly explained by respondents (RE) and (M):

*"... with Grammarly, I can improve the sentence structure in the background of my proposal for the better." - RE*

*"... very helpful because every time I checked on Grammarly, I found many grammatical errors that I initially thought were correct, but it turned out that they were still not used correctly." - M*

How students use Grammarly as a tool for writing their thesis background is illustrated in the following diagram. Starting from technical dependence, critical awareness of the role of the supervising lecturer, and selective use of suggestions, this diagram shows a reflective process.

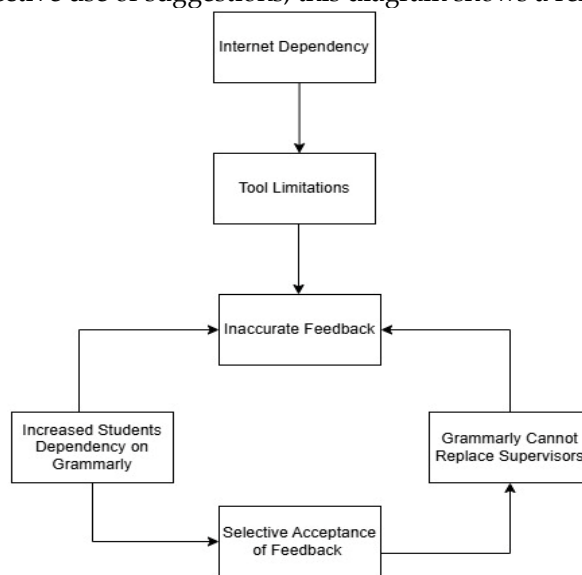


Figure 4. Students' Overall Perspectives on the use of Grammarly

## Discussion

This section discusses the research results about previous research and theories to provide further interpretation of the interview data. Statements are organized thematically based on the main topics of the participants' answers. Each theme is examined to emphasize how final-year students' perspectives and use Grammarly as a tool to assist them in writing their thesis backgrounds. The research focuses on the types of grammatical errors commonly found, the usefulness and accuracy of Grammarly's feedback, and its limitations as a writing tool.

### Types of Errors Frequently Identified by Grammarly

Based on data obtained from interviews, it was found that Grammarly regularly identifies various common grammatical errors found in the writing of student thesis backgrounds. Word choice, punctuation, verb tense usage, and subject-verb agreement are the areas most frequently affected by these errors. Misspellings and incorrect use of articles are other recurring errors. Most respondents acknowledged that Grammarly helped them identify grammar issues they had previously overlooked, particularly in terms of sentence clarity and verb consistency. Some participants stated that they often misused plural verbs, punctuation, and tenses. With immediate and easily accessible feedback, respondents could easily identify grammar weaknesses that became more apparent.

The findings of this study are consistent with those reported by Rahmi (2023), which examined grammatical errors made by students. The study categorized several types of errors that are often detected by Grammarly grammar checking software and found that sentence pattern and punctuation errors were the most prevalent grammatical errors. Additionally, the study also noted that errors in tense usage are quite common among students. The findings of this study are also consistent with those of a study conducted by Akbar (2023), which stated that the free version of the Grammarly grammar-checking software can only detect basic errors such as articles, spacing, and punctuation. Overall, Grammarly has proven useful for addressing basic language issues. However, it cannot fully support the more complex syntactic and contextual elements of academic writing, which require human guidance from a mentor.

### Students' Responses to Grammarly Feedback

In this section, respondents provided two views regarding the use of Grammarly. Initially, respondents considered Grammarly to be a very useful and easy-to-use tool. They

found that this program was useful for finding common grammatical errors, such as punctuation, article usage, and incorrect word forms. These initial positive results were largely due to Grammarly's real-time feedback and user-friendly interface. This is also explained through research (Cavaleri, 2016), which states that Grammarly Checker Software is very useful and easy to use. The factors of "usefulness" and "ease of use" were both rated positively by students. They said that Grammarly Checker Software is useful and easy to use, and they are confident that they will continue to use it. Subsequently, before thesis guidance sessions, respondents often used Grammarly as a preparation tool. They used this program to improve their drafts and grammar before asking for feedback from their supervisors. This was also discussed in a study conducted by Setyani et al. (2023), which stated that Grammarly boosted respondents' confidence in their writing before meeting with their supervisors.

However, some respondents said that Grammarly sometimes provides incorrect or irrelevant corrections. In certain situations, the feedback changes the meaning of a sentence or makes inconsistent changes between related sentences. In this experience, students chose to use Grammarly's recommendations selectively; they accepted technical corrections but rejected changes that contradicted the meaning. This is also emphasized by Iriani et al. (2024), who discuss students' perceptions of Grammarly for improving writing accuracy. The study explains that there are concerns regarding the sentence corrections provided by Grammarly, which may disrupt sentence coherence, or the suggestions given may have inappropriate meanings. In this case, they decided to maintain their writing style and only make technical corrections as needed. Respondents recognized that the use of Grammarly cannot replace the basic writing process of understanding concepts and the logic of arguments. In other words, while Grammarly assists with technical aspects, ideas and flow must be created independently. As a result, students typically appreciate Grammarly's help with grammatical accuracy, but they also recognize its limitations. The tool is seen as a helpful writing companion rather than a comprehensive academic advisor.

### **Students' Experiences: Limitations and Challenges of Using Grammarly**

Although Grammarly grammar checking software helps students find basic grammar mistakes, students encounter a number of problems and limitations when using it. One of its main limitations is that its functions are only available in the free version, which only reviews basic grammar elements such as punctuation, verbs, and spacing. Only the premium version has advanced features that can help explain sentences, tone, or argument structure. Therefore, respondents cannot take advantage of it. This has also been discussed in research conducted by Akbar (2023), who explained that basically, the free version of Grammarly can find minor errors, such as commas and incorrect articles. Therefore, the only items that can be checked are articles, spaces, and punctuation. It has been reported that other technical issues include the need for a stable internet connection, which often disrupts the use of software, especially for students with limited internet access. This is also explained by Dewi (2022) which states that the additional weakness of Grammarly can only be used on the internet. This causes limitations in the use of Grammarly, so that its use is not always optimal. Astuti et al. (2023) also stated that Grammarly requires a high-speed internet connection to perform all its functions.

Furthermore, respondents also said that Grammarly's suggestions for complex sentence structures were inaccurate. The tool sometimes made changes that did not match the intent of the paragraph or were inconsistent. As a result, they had to use their judgment and often ignored the feedback. These findings align with the results of a study by O'Neill & Russell (2019), which highlighted limitations in the accuracy of the suggestions provided and a tendency to overlook errors in writing. Despite the challenges identified, it is known that users frequently utilize this grammar-checking tool. Nevertheless, many respondents said they often use and even become dependent on such software. The high language standards expected of English language education programs are the main cause of this dependence. Of course, the respondents are aware that Grammarly cannot replace the opinions of their

academic advisors; while the tool improves technical accuracy, it cannot assess the logic, clarity, and relevance of the arguments in their theses. This statement is supported by research conducted by Abu et al. (2024). Although the Grammarly grammar-checking software provides instant feedback on many grammar issues, this feedback is sometimes incorrect. This study also suggests that Grammarly should be used alongside feedback provided by supervisors.

### **Students' Overall Perspectives on the Use of Grammarly**

The general perspectives among respondents are that they view Grammarly, the grammar-checking software, as positive overall. This tool is considered useful for addressing common grammar issues such as punctuation, sentence structure, and article usage, especially during the thesis background writing stage. The results of this study align with previous research conducted by Rababah & Talafha (2024), which showed that Grammarly has an effect in improving the writing skills of EFL students by addressing issues related to writing skills. It is stated that it helps through the feedback and grammar corrections it provides. Grammarly is useful as a writing assistant because many respondents consider the background section to be one of the most challenging parts. Students stated that Grammarly improves the grammar of their drafts. They mentioned that the tool helps identify errors that might have been overlooked. This enhances the quality of their work and boosts their confidence, especially before meeting with their thesis advisors.

Psychological benefits include reduced anxiety and increased motivation to talk about frequently occurring subjects. Grammarly also provides students with an initial layer of support, which makes them more prepared to receive academic feedback. These findings are reinforced by research conducted by Setyani et al. (2023), which shows an increase in students' confidence in their writing before meeting with their advisors. In this study, it is detailed that the grammar-checking feature offered by the Grammarly has enhanced confidence and reduced anxiety and uncertainty related to grammar and linguistic errors. Additionally, the study concludes that Grammarly increases motivation and reduces the workload of writing.

However, despite these benefits, respondents are aware of the tool's limitations. Some respondents believe that Grammarly cannot provide feedback on more complex, complicated, or context-sensitive academic writing. Students acknowledge that the suggestions offered can sometimes interfere with the meaning or coherence of their arguments. Another concern was that respondents were too reliant on Grammarly. Although the program has proven helpful in finding and correcting errors, they recognized the importance of improving language awareness and academic writing skills. Respondents emphasized that Grammarly should not be used as a substitute for feedback from supervisors, which they considered to be more accurate and context-specific.

In short, Grammarly is considered a tool that helps improve grammar and boost confidence in writing. However, respondents need to remember that this software should only serve as a complementary tool that can help and support, not as a substitute for independent writing development and academic guidance.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study discussed the perspectives and experiences of final-year students when using Grammarly to support the writing of their thesis background. The main results show that Grammarly helps identify common grammatical issues, particularly in word choice, tenses, punctuation, and article usage. Students acknowledge that Grammarly boosts their confidence before meeting with their teachers, especially by improving sentence structure and grammatical accuracy. Despite this, limitations are also apparent. The free version only has basic features, and some recommendations are inaccurate or irrelevant. In some situations, the feedback contradicts research expectations or changes the actual meaning of the sentence. Students indicate that they use Grammarly selectively and emphasize that the program should not replace the important role of a mentor. In short, Grammarly is

considered a writing tool that helps improve surface grammar accuracy and boost confidence. However, Grammarly cannot replace the critical, contextual, and structural advice of an academic advisor. Therefore, Grammarly should not be used as a substitute for academic guidance when writing a thesis; instead, it should be used as a complementary tool.

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