

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF GRAMMARLY ON STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS

THESIS

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THESIS

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As One of the Requirements to Obtain a Bachelor's Degree in the
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This statement is made truthfully and without coercion from any party.

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Declarant,



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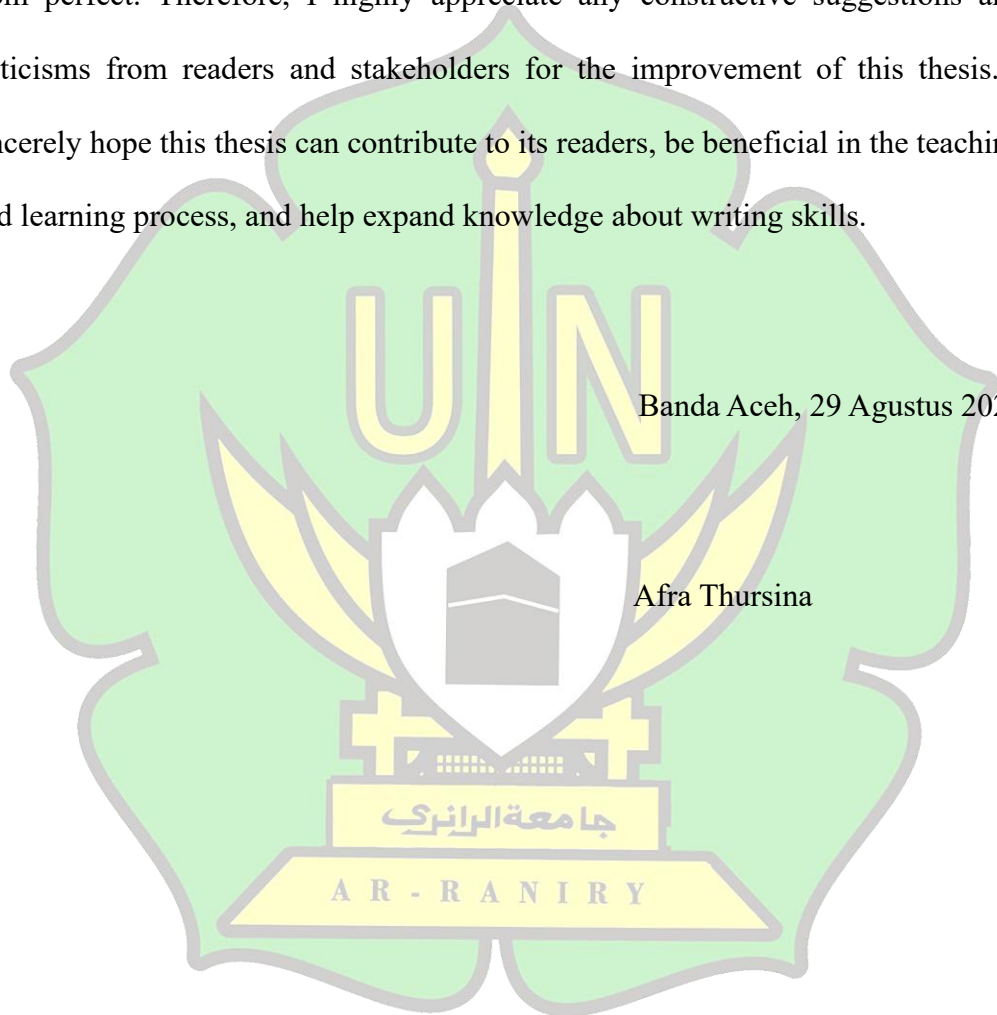
I sincerely thank the participants of my research who wholeheartedly took part in this study. Despite their busy schedules, they have greatly assisted me.

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ABSTRACT

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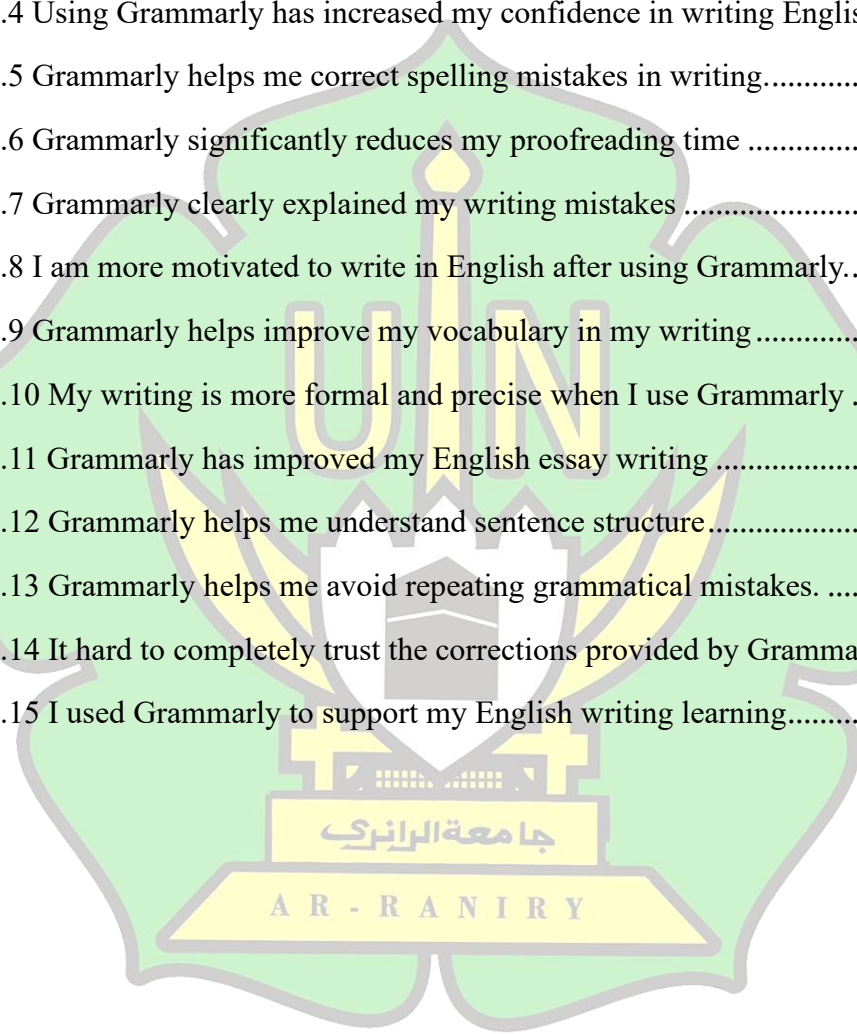
This study aims to investigate the perceived impact of Grammarly on the English writing skills of students in the English Language Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the research collected quantitative data through a closed-ended questionnaire distributed to 37 students, followed by qualitative data from in-depth interviews to provide a deeper understanding of the findings. The results indicate that the majority of students perceive Grammarly positively, noting its effectiveness in identifying grammatical errors, improving spelling, enhancing vocabulary, and increasing the formality and precision of their writing. Additionally, students reported greater confidence and motivation in writing, as well as reduced proofreading time. However, some expressed hesitation in fully trusting Grammarly's suggestions, particularly for context-sensitive or stylistic corrections. The study concludes that Grammarly serves as a valuable digital writing assistant that significantly supports the development of students' writing skills, though its effectiveness is enhanced when complemented by critical human evaluation and comprehensive language instruction. These findings offer practical implications for integrating digital literacy tools like Grammarly into English language teaching and learning strategies.

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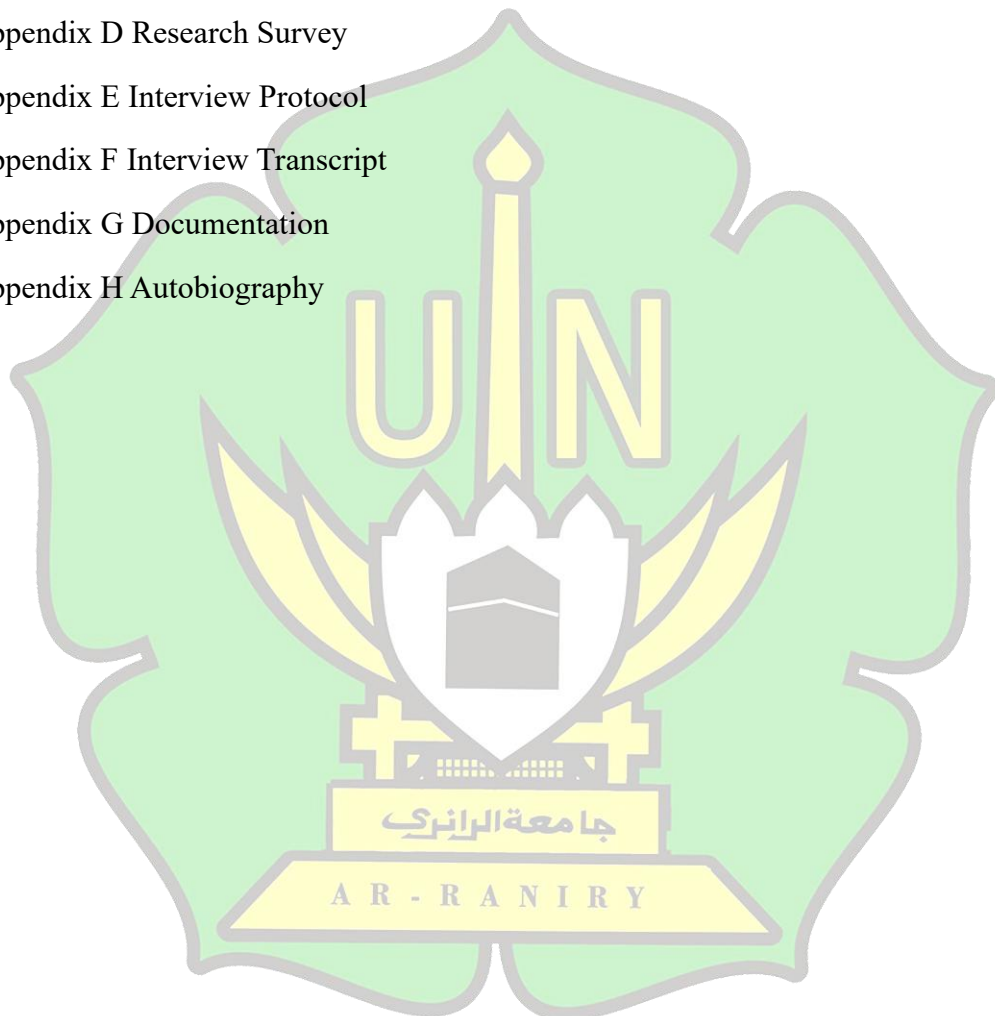
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The rapid development of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning emphasizes the importance of academic writing skills that are grammatically accurate, coherent, and compliant with rhetorical conventions (Syahputra, 2014). In recent years, automated writing evaluation (AWE) has emerged as a technology-assisted approach that provides automated and measurable feedback on written drafts. Empirical evidence suggests that AWE training/exposure contributes to improved writing quality through more frequent and targeted revision cycles, while a recent systematic review specifically mapped trends, methods, and research findings on Grammarly in L2 learners (Gilbert, 2024). These findings position Grammarly as one of the most widely adopted representations of AWE in higher education contexts.

As an AWE tool, Grammarly combines mechanical error detection (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation) with style, clarity, and consistency suggestions, and provides relatively immediate, explanation-based feedback. Several recent studies report positive student perceptions of Grammarly's usefulness and ease of use, as well as indications of increased grammatical accuracy and writing confidence, both when used alone and in combination with instructor feedback (Miranty & Utami, 2024). In the Indonesian context, including at UIN Ar-Raniry, Grammarly is often positioned as a form of digital

literacy that assists students in completing academic work such as undergraduate theses, journal articles, and papers. This strengthens Grammarly's position as a practical and relevant writing learning support tool for students (David, 2024). At the same time, recent literature emphasizes that the perceived impact and intention to utilize automated assistance depend on psychosocial factors and technology acceptance, such as perceived usefulness, academic norms, and trust in feedback quality. Recent research in the humanities and social sciences has demonstrated the dynamics of students seeking AWE assistance, while recent correlational and survey studies have documented associations between Grammarly usage intensity, acceptance of its corrective features, and perceived improvement in writing skills. Furthermore, recent research has assessed the precision of Grammarly's feedback in identifying common errors in EFL writers, thus influencing students' assessments of the tool's reliability (Christal, 2025).

However, academic discourse warns of potential pedagogical and ethical risks: overreliance on automated recommendations, ambiguity about the boundaries of acceptable assistance, and implications for academic integrity in the era of generative AI (Nigel, 2025). Recent reviews and guidelines emphasize the need for careful integration so that efficiency gains do not compromise originality, assessment fairness, and students' digital ethical literacy. This framework is crucial for interpreting "perceived impact": not simply mechanical score increases, but also how students perceive Grammarly's

contribution to their writing thinking processes, language independence, and adherence to academic integrity norms.

Furthermore, recent evidence also evaluates the reliability and limitations of Grammarly as a tool for assessing/assisting academic writing, and maps its effectiveness in ELT classrooms through a systematic literature review from 2020–2024. While there are indications that automated feedback can facilitate local improvements (e.g., grammar, mechanics), questions remain regarding its impact on higher-order discourse aspects (global coherence, argument development) and the transfer of revision strategies (Abdallah, 2024). This knowledge gap reinforces the urgency of research focusing on students' perceptions of Grammarly's impact on their writing skills, particularly in EFL contexts, so that educational institutions can design policies and teaching practices that balance the use of technology with the ongoing development of writing literacy.

In exploring the use of digital literacy applications in English language learning, the author reviewed several previous studies that have examined topics related to digital literacy, both domestic and international. While this study shares some similarities with previous studies, it also has gaps and novelties in terms of focus and objectives.

The research by Mardiana (2024) used a mixed-methods approach to examine the impact of lecturers' digital literacy skills on higher education institutions, highlighting how the integration of technology affects teaching,

learning, and research processes. The study found that many lecturers still need to improve their use of technological tools, resources, and platforms, which, if not addressed, could become barriers to educational experiences and academic achievement. By adopting the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework, this research emphasizes the importance of integrating technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge to make the use of technology in education more effective. The main findings indicate a positive correlation between faculty members' digital literacy and teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes, although challenges remain in the form of insufficient training and resistance to change in technology adoption.

Although Mardiana (2024) research provides a strong foundation regarding the influence of digital literacy in higher education, there are fundamental differences with the research in this thesis. Mardiana's research focuses more on lecturers' digital literacy and its general impact on teaching, learning, and institutional performance. In contrast, this thesis specifically examines students' digital literacy and its impact on their language skills. This difference in focus creates a significant research gap, as there are few studies that directly examine the relationship between students' digital literacy levels and improvements in their language skills, particularly in the Department of English Education at UIN Ar-Raniry. The novelty of this thesis lies in its in-depth exploration of the impact of digital literacy from the students' perspective, rather than the lecturers', and in its measurement of the impact on a very specific learning outcome, namely language skills. Additionally, the use of explanatory mixed

methods in the local environment of UIN Ar-Raniry, involving 11 respondents from the English Language Education Department, will provide unique and contextual insights that are not covered in the broader scope of Mardiana's research. Thus, this research is expected to fill the knowledge gap regarding how students actively utilize digital literacy to improve their language skills, while identifying challenges and relevant strategies in a specific academic environment.

In addition, research conducted by Gilbert (2017) focused on ESL (English as a Second Language) students' perceptions of their digital reading experiences, particularly in relation to metacognitive online reading strategies among middle and high school students. Using an interpretive qualitative approach through observation, interviews, group discussions, and participant journals, Gilbert found that language learners applied different reading strategies when dealing with web texts compared to printed texts. This study also highlights the importance of teaching digital literacy skills alongside the development of traditional literacy in the target language. Although the participants had basic knowledge of Web 2.0 tools and social media, they still lacked skills in accessing and evaluating online information effectively, tended to rely too heavily on Google, and demonstrated a superficial understanding of information credibility due to a lack of critical thinking skills and overconfidence in their digital literacy abilities.

However, Gilbert (2017) research has several fundamental differences from this thesis, including the focus of the study, methodology, and research context.

While Gilbert studied general perceptions of digital reading using qualitative methods in the United States, this research will specifically examine the impact of digital literacy on students' language skills using mixed methods in the UIN Ar-Raniry environment in Indonesia. These geographical and institutional contextual differences have the potential to yield unique and locally relevant findings. In addition, this study offers novelty by combining qualitative and quantitative data to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital literacy and language skills, as well as providing empirical evidence that can be used to develop more effective curricula and teaching strategies at the Department of English Education at UIN Ar-Raniry and other similar institutions.

Furthermore, research conducted by Nurlaili and Siregar (2021) examined the impact of digital literacy on improving the English language skills and character of students in the Merdeka Student Exchange Program (PMM). Using the Classroom Action Research (PTK) method, this study involved ten PMM students from the first cohort of the Merdeka Campus who took the English for Job Hunting course at the University of Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah in Medan. The research results showed a significant improvement in students' English language proficiency, with their average scores increasing from 61.9% before the intervention to 69.9% in the first cycle and 78.5% in the second cycle, and the completion rate reaching 90% in the second cycle. The learning process utilized English-language videos and texts, and encouraged students to create English-language videos relevant to the course material.

Although Nurlaili and Siregar (2021) research provides strong evidence of the positive impact of digital literacy on English language proficiency, there are several fundamental differences with the research in this thesis. That study used the PTK method, which focuses on interventions in specific classrooms, while this thesis employs an explanatory mixed methods approach, enabling both the identification and in-depth explanation of the impact of digital literacy through the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. Additionally, the subjects of Nurlaili and Siregar's research came from various academic backgrounds, while this thesis will focus on students from the English Language Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry, providing a more specific understanding of the influence of digital literacy in the context of language studies. Although the number of respondents is not significantly different, the more homogeneous characteristics of the respondents in this thesis research are expected to provide more focused data.

In addition, the research by Tran Kieu My An (2025) examined the use of the Grammarly application in improving English writing skills among second-year English majors at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Using a qualitative method, this study analyzed 40 writing samples from ten students over a period of one month, focusing on the impact of Grammarly on accuracy, clarity, and engagement in writing. The results indicate that Grammarly provides reliable feedback on grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, helping students identify errors and improve the quality of their writing. However, the study also revealed some challenges, such as reliance on

a stable internet connection and limitations in the free version's features, which sometimes do not fully align with students' writing intentions, particularly in terms of clarity and engagement.

The main differences between Tran Kieu My An research and this thesis lie in the focus, methods, and research context. While Tran emphasizes the impact of using AI-based writing tools, particularly Grammarly, on improving grammar and sentence structure using a purely qualitative approach, this thesis examines the broader impact of digital literacy on various language skills of students using a mixed method that combines quantitative and qualitative data. Additionally, the research context differs, as Tran conducted her study in Vietnam with English language students, whereas this thesis was conducted at UIN Ar-Raniry in Indonesia, with respondents from the Department of English Language Education, who may have different levels of digital literacy and language needs. The gap that emerges is the lack of comprehensive research examining the overall influence of digital literacy on various aspects of students' language skills in Indonesian higher education, as well as the limited use of mixed methods to achieve a holistic understanding.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Zuhri (2024) presents a comprehensive literature review on the development of digital literacy in relation to 21st-century skills, particularly at the primary education level. The study found that digital literacy plays an important role in supporting students' critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills. However, its implementation still faces significant obstacles such as technological access

gaps and limited training for teachers. In addition, the article emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration to improve digital literacy in order to create an inclusive and effective educational ecosystem.

Although Zuhri's research provides a strong overview of digital literacy and 21st-century skills, there are several significant differences with the research in this thesis. First, Zuhri used a systematic literature review approach with a focus on primary education in general, while this thesis research employed a mixed methods (explanatory mixed methods) approach conducted specifically at UIN Ar-Raniry campus with respondents from the Department of English Education. Second, Zuhri's research primarily focuses on digital literacy and 21st-century skills in general, whereas this thesis specifically examines the impact of digital literacy on students' language skills. Zuhri does mention that digital literacy supports communication, but does not delve deeply into its specific impact on language skills. Additionally, Zuhri's research identified the lack of studies specifically examining the relationship between digital literacy and 21st-century skills at the elementary school level, and noted geographical gaps in existing research, which mostly only measured students' or teachers' digital literacy levels without directly linking them to 21st-century skills.

The benefits of this research are to provide a deeper understanding of the role of digital literacy in developing the language skills of UIN Ar-Raniry students. Additionally, the research findings can serve as a reference for educational institutions in designing curricula or digital literacy training programs that support the enhancement of language skills. For students, the

research findings can help them choose the most suitable digital tools to strengthen their linguistic competencies.

B. Research Question

1. How do students perceive the use of Grammarly in improving their English writing skills?
2. To what extent does the use of Grammarly contribute to improving students' English writing skills based on the results of quantitative analysis and qualitative explanations?

C. Research Aims

1. To determine students' perceptions of using Grammarly to improve their English writing skills.
2. To examine the extent to which using Grammarly contributes to improving students' English writing skills based on quantitative analysis and qualitative explanations.

D. Significance of the Study

This research is important for students because it provides insight into how Grammarly, as a form of digital literacy, helps improve academic writing skills. The automated feedback provided allows students to identify and correct language errors more quickly, thereby fostering grammatical awareness and increasing confidence in writing English texts. Previous studies have also confirmed that the use of AWE, including Grammarly, is effective in improving the writing quality of EFL students. For lecturers, this research provides a practical contribution to understanding students' perceptions of Grammarly's

effectiveness. This information can be used to design more appropriate writing learning strategies, combining automated feedback with lecturer feedback. Recent research shows that integrating writing support technology can increase student motivation and enrich the revision process. Furthermore, this research has institutional significance, particularly for UIN Ar-Raniry, where Grammarly is widely used in the preparation of undergraduate theses, journals, and papers. Therefore, the research findings can serve as a basis for institutions in formulating policies on the ethical and proportional use of language technology in academic settings.

E. Terminology

In this study, several key terms are operationally defined to provide clarity and consistency in understanding the research focus. Grammarly refers to the AI-powered digital writing assistant tool used by students to check and improve grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, and engagement in English texts. Writing Skills encompass the students' ability to produce written English text with correctness, coherence, and appropriateness, including grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, sentence structure, and overall text quality. Perceived Impact denotes the subjective views, experiences, and judgments of students regarding how using Grammarly influences their English writing abilities, as captured through survey responses and interviews. Students in this context specifically refer to undergraduate learners enrolled in the English Language Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry who have used Grammarly for academic writing purposes.

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