

Grammarly As a Tool to Improve Students' Writing Quality (Free Online Proofreader across the Boundaries)

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Abstract. This study aims at finding out whether the use of Grammarly could improve the students' writing quality related to writing descriptive. This study is conducted based on the lecturer's observation which implied that students had a problem with grammar and diction. From the interview, the lecturer said that the students felt bored and uninterested in writing. Moreover, most of the students thought that writing in English is so difficult. In order to overcome the problems, the researchers collaborated with the lecturer conducted an action research which involved 40 students. The research data were collected by three instruments, i.e. interview, students' essays, and questionnaires. Then, the findings show that when Grammarly is used in teaching descriptive, there are 32 (82%) out of 40 students passed the passing grade. The researchers concluded that Grammarly can be used as an appropriate tool to minimize errors and improve students' writing quality.

Keyword: Writing quality; improvement; online-proofreader

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I. INTRODUCTION

In modern Era as right now, writing plays an important role in real life. There are several products of writing that human being as social creature needs as media to share ideas. According to Meyers (2005), writing is an action. There are some steps in the writing process, they are the process of discovering and organizing the idea, writing or putting them on paper, reshaping and revise the writing. Teaching EFL students are considered as one of the most challenging teaching practices. Students are usually lack of motivation or discouraged easily even though they were EFL students. Their mindsets say that foreign language is difficult to learn because its differences in many aspects than Bahasa Indonesia. In this case, the lecturer needs to be responsive to the classroom condition and make it more

relaxing for the students.

The problem of writing's quality was found after researchers conducted the preliminary study. The students faced the difficulties in phrases, unfamiliar words, adverb, and passive words. EFL students have to master how to make writing in the form of formal language according to the academic requirements. At this point, the other problems come up because most of EFL students agree that writing is the most difficult skill and need long-term to master it. Same statements expressed by professional and non-professional writers that the process of writing was difficult and complex (Levy, 1995).

Unfortunately, the lecturer often did common mistake when they were teaching writing to their students. The lecturer was not aware that they have made a circumstance which led the students spent

too many times in copying the model of writing rather than expressing their own ideas creatively (Sokoholic, 2003). The researchers believe that university students could be better by self-review by using technology in learning writing (Hui & Yinjuan, 2011). Based on the facts about monotonous teaching media done by the previous lecturer, it makes the researchers use the free online proofreader as media in teaching writing. Grammarly is an online proofreading website that can be used to scan documents for grammar mistakes (Schrauder, —). They are students of 2014 from Management Department, Faculty of Economy in As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University. This classroom action research was conducted to improve the writing quality for the students of 2014 at As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University. The study limited on the students in the third semester from Writing Description Class. From the background above, the researchers formulated a statement of the problem: Does free online proofreader improve the students' writing quality in writing description text?

Literature Review

a. Language Teaching

According to Setiyadi (2000, p. 22), language teaching is influenced by ideas on the nature of language (language theories) and the learning conditions that make learners acquire the language (learning theories). Language teaching needs the formal instruction or the methods of training, like supporting activities such as the preparation of teaching materials, teaching grammar, dictionaries, or the training of the lecturers, they all fall under the concept of teaching. Finally, language teaching is not only the class activity which needs the formal instruction or the methods of training, but it is also the activities

intended to bring about language learning, so a theory of language teaching always implies a concept of language learning.

b. Writing Quality

McNamara et.al (2010) found that writing quality essays in skilled writers' essays contained linguistic features which related to the text difficulty (syntax complexity, lexical diversity, and word frequency) and sophisticated language. Furthermore, they added that helping students to learn writing strategies, and construct the writing process, will help students to improve the sophistication of their language. Based on Fowler, et al. (2007), theories which related to the writing process have focused on how writers perceived or explored their selves and their worlds through the medium of language (orally or written). In line with Fowler, Elbow (1989) viewed the process of writing was interesting for being personal, task-oriented, and cognitive.

VanderPyl (2012) proposed some stages in the process of composing a writing, they were: Planning, Drafting, Revising, and Editing. Planning includes brainstorming (thinking, talking to others, taking notes, outlining, and searching sources) and goal setting. Bello (1997) implied that Brainstorming can be done in oral (discussion) or written, as an individual or as a group (class). Students construct a visual representation of their thoughts and minds during the process of planning (First & MacMilan, 1995), which in line with the objective or goal. The visual representations take the form of webs, charts, or notes on paper (Saddler & Andrade, 2004). In keeping with the problem faced by students, the writing strategies recommended should involve planning and revising. Consequently, the best way to enhance students writing quality is carrying out a suitable strategy that covers all problems.

c. Web-Based Learning

The Internet is providing a new powerful, flexible, and efficient tool for technology-enhanced learning. Online education or through the World Wide Web (WWW or Web) has become a prominent feature of Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and is also considered as the easiest and the most popular approach to higher education because of advanced computer technology. This new trend is called Web-based Learning (WBL). Scholars have defined WBL as “a hypermedia-based educational program which utilizes the attributes and resources of the World Wide Web to create a meaningful learning environment where learning is fostered and supported” (Khan, 1997); “the application of a repertoire of cognitively oriented instructional strategies with a constructivist and collaborative language learning environment, utilizing the attributes and resources of the World Wide Web” (Relan & Gillami (1997); “individualized instruction delivered over public or private computer networks and displayed by a Web browser (Clark, 1996) (cited in Henke, 1997, p.1).

A web-based writing environment can improve students' writing skills over the conventional writing environment. Lin (1997) summarized the advantages for a web-based writing environment as: enabling students to inspect and learn from each other; enabling students to give and receive feedback; enabling students to publish their work, providing a good editing environment for students, and providing a learning environment. Integrating information and communication technologies into a computer-based writing environment can enhance interactions among students and the lecturer over the conventional writing

environment. Studies have shown that the writing with a computer rather than using pen and paper can reduce students' errors (Grejda & Hannafin, 1992) and increase the writing quality (Breese et al., 1996; Lam & Pennington, 1995). McCarthy and Grabowski (1999) have also stated that incorporating Web-based lessons and activities is a new way for lecturers to utilize computer technology to enhance learning. Therefore, WBL is not only encouraging students in learning but also makes lecturers' teachings are more attractive and interactive.

d. Technology Used in Language Teaching

Some applications MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) have suggested by Andersen (2013) in his review such Busuu, Wlingua, Hello-Hello, Learn English, eLecturer, Voxy, GymGlish to assist language learners in study English easily. Those applications can be downloaded and used by users easily from their mobile phone; it almost like learning with a private tutor. While in web-based learning or CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) also provided 'a private tool' which is able to check the learners' errors. Grammarly is one of the powerful tools that make it easy to check user writing for grammar errors, potential stylistic mistakes, and other features of interest. Grammarly is the free-online proofreading website that can be used to scan documents for grammar mistakes (Schrauder, —). To use this web-based learning, the researchers asked the students to bring their laptop and open the website together in the classroom. Then, they are asked to check and revise their essay.

II. METHOD

The research design used in this study is Action Research. In this study, Action Research is used to find out the innovative and effective way to teach writing skill. According to Hedley (2003, p. 3) Action Research is the reflective language lecturer's organized and ongoing search for classroom solutions and professional insight. Firstly, the researchers conducted a preliminary study to find out the problem faced by students. After knowing the problem happened among students, the researchers planned a teaching strategy to solve the problems. This was the first step to begin the implementation of Action Research. The next step was implementing the strategy. It was followed by observing the teaching-learning activities as the third step. As the final step was reflecting how the strategy improves the students' speaking ability. The aforementioned steps form one cycle of Action Research. After having reflection, we could see if the criteria of success had been met. If the first cycle result did not fulfill the criterion of success, it signified that the second cycle was required to be implemented (see figure 2.1).

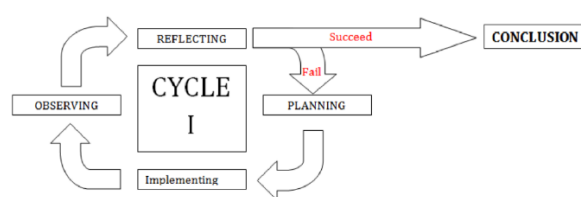


Figure 2.1 The four steps of Action Research

In this section, the researchers apply the study, which is adapted from the stages of Action Research. The stages are preliminary study, planning the action, implementing, observing, and reflecting. Each of the stages is explained as follows.

Preliminary Study

A preliminary study was conducted on October 26, 2015, by the researchers before

giving the treatments. In the preliminary study, the researchers conducted the semi-structured interview to the lecturer by phone. The data helped the researchers to figure out the students' condition and needs.

Cycle 1

There are two cycles in doing this classroom action research. The first cycle was conducted on two meetings which conducted on November 16 and 18, 2015. Researchers started to organize some activities, materials, and time allotment in a form of the lesson plan. It is continued by determining the criteria of success through the implementation of the tool. In cycle 1, the lecturer explained the objectives of the teaching and learning process. The main activity was started by explaining the material and gave an individual assignment to measure the students' ability. From the first assignment, it was known that students' writing did not meet the lecturer's expectation because the students made many errors (grammar and diction) in their essay. In the end, the lecturer gave them the assignment to make an outline related to the description text. In this cycle, the students were asked to write free topic essay writing in a description. In this first meeting, the students got difficulty in arranging the correct sentence. They got confused to use the correct grammar, the use of an article, preposition, and so on. Based on the observation and evaluation of the learning activities section showed some reflections as follows:

1. The implementation of the learning process in writing description did not achieve the expected results.
2. Most students made the mistake of arranging the word in a sentence.
3. The appropriate lesson plan has shown students actively in learning activities

Cycle 2

The cycle 2 was conducted on November 23 and 25, 2015. The lesson plan designed for two meetings which spend 2x50 minutes for a day. In this action, the lecturer explained the objectives of the teaching-learning process. The activity started by explaining the material and asking the students to make an essay based on their outline. The lecturer helped students by checking their outline and remain the organization of the essay. Having finished, the students check their essay using Grammarly and revise it.

In this cycle, the students asked to bring their essay as their homework. If in the cycle 1 most students were confused, in this cycle the students were expected to get a better progress in arranging the sentence essay by checking it using Grammarly. In reflecting part, the researchers expected that the students have an improvement in their writings quality. The writing quality measured based on the writing indicators such as grammar and vocabulary.

Research Instruments

The instruments used interview, students' essays, and questionnaire. The interview was conducted by phone. It used to help the researchers gained some information about the students and the class conditions. The result of the interview helped the researchers to find out the problem which existed in that class. There were five questions for the English lecturer. The document used in this study was the students' writing essays. The students were asked to describe their university. All students' essays were sent to the lecturer via email. Totally, there were 80 essays from cycle 1 and 2 (40 essays/ cycle) from 40 students. All the essays assessed by the lecturer herself using a scoring rubric which

provided by the researchers. The essays from cycle 1 were assessed using some criteria such as content, organization, language, vocabulary, and mechanics. In the cycle 2, the lecturer focused on assessing only 2 criteria; the language (grammar) and vocabulary (diction) in students' essays. The questionnaires were given at the end of the cycle 2. The result of the questionnaire was in the form of a checklist, which showed students responses. This data helped the lecturer-researchers to figure out the students' opinions toward the implementation of free online-proofreader.

The Criteria of Success

The criteria of success were set in order to determine whether the tool successfully solved the problem. The criteria of success in this study are 80% of the students achieve the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM) score (80 points).

Reflecting

The data analysis had done by analyzing the students' scores from writing essays. The researchers asked the lecturer's help to assess the students' essays. If most of the students do not achieve the target score, it means that the tool failed to improve students' writing quality in their essays.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The writing score that the students obtained in the writing test in Cycle 2 was significantly better than in Cycle 1. There were 32 students out 40 students reached writing scores equal to and higher than KKM. It means that the percentage of the class mastery was relatively high up to 82%. The mean score of the writing test also improved from 79.1 in the cycle 1 to 84.6 in the cycle 2. From the result of the test, the students' writing scores in Cycle 2

had successfully met the criteria of success as the percentage of students who passed the KKM was 82% (32 students out of 40 students).

Cycle	Mean Score	Percentage of Class Mastery
Cycle 1	79.1	60%
Cycle 2	84.6	82%

Table 1 The Improvement of the Students' Writing Skill in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

From the questionnaire, the students gave positive response towards the implementation of Grammarly. The questionnaire showed that most of the students (87,5%) agreed that Grammarly helps them to review or revise their essays and 34 students believed towards the accuracy of correction by Grammarly.

Based on the result above, it was found that the use of Grammarly as the teaching tool was very helpful. This reflected from the findings that students' mean score achieved the KKM. In line with Lin (1997), the advantages from web-based writing environment have enabling students to reflect and learn from each other, enabling students to receive feedback, providing a good editing environment for students, and providing a learning environment. Moreover, the advantages are not only the students' errors were significantly decreasing after using Grammarly but also increased their awareness in how to use the article and choose the right diction. As stated by Grejda & Hannafin (1992), studies have shown that the writing with a computer rather than using pen and paper can reduce students' errors.

The use of Grammarly impacts not only on the students but also on the lecturer. The lecturer admitted that the use of Grammarly was very helpful to minimize giving correction on students' essay and the students' were very actively participated in the teaching-learning process. McCarthy and Grabowski (1999) have also stated that incorporating Web-

based lessons and activities are new ways for lecturers to utilize computer technology to enhance learning.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing data, the researchers highlighted that the use of Grammarly is successful to improve students' writing quality. Those are seen from the students' writing score which improved using Grammarly, questioner that showed students positive response using Grammarly, and also lecturers' response on the effect of using Grammarly toward students' writing error.

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