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Research Article

A Systematic Literature Review on the Use of Grammarly in Improving the Writing Skills of ESL/EFL Students

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the effectiveness of Grammarly as an Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tool for improving the writing skills of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Drawing on 10 studies published between 2018 and 2024, the review assesses Grammarly's key features, benefits, and limitations. Results show that Grammarly significantly reduces grammatical errors, enhances students' writing confidence, and fosters autonomous learning. However, challenges such as over-reliance on the tool and its limited capacity to provide comprehensive feedback on higher-order writing skills remain. The review underscores the need for further research into Grammarly's long-term effects on writing development, particularly its efficacy across various academic disciplines and contexts.

Keywords: Grammarly, ESL/EFL, Writing skills

Introduction

In the digital age, enhancing academic writing skills is important. Technological tools have played a significant role in improving writing proficiency. Grammarly, an online writing assistant, is a prime example, offering features that support and enhance writing skills. It is considered an essential companion for students, providing real-time corrections and suggestions (Syafi'i, 2020). Grammarly is widely recognized for its helpfulness, offering vocabulary and grammar suggestions, mechanics corrections, and plagiarism checks for premium users (Puri & Setiamunadi, 2023). This tool not only corrects errors but also provides

personalized feedback, which complements traditional English language instruction and leads to positive user experiences and improved writing skills (Prasetya & Raharjo, 2023).

Research has demonstrated the clear benefits of using Grammarly in education. For instance, it significantly enhances students' writing abilities, with an average improvement score of 80.68 and an 84% positive response rate from English teachers (Maulidina & Wibowo, 2022). Moreover, Grammarly's effectiveness extends to mobile-assisted language learning, where it reduces grammatical errors and increases lexical variation, thus improving

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the quality of second-language writing (Dizon & Gayed, 2021). By helping students identify and correct errors in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, Grammarly is a valuable resource for developing writing proficiency (Fahmi & Rachmijati, 2021).

Grammarly's practical and accessible nature makes it an effective tool for improving writing efficiency, thereby increasing students' interest and confidence in learning writing skills (Raskova, 2023). Its use in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) writing classes has been linked to significant improvements in students' writing performance and satisfaction, as well as a reduction in the teaching load for educators (Huang et al., 2020). Grammarly also improves students' accuracy in writing descriptive texts and enhancing their motivation and confidence (Hadiat, 2022). Compared to traditional teaching methods, Grammarly has been shown to significantly improve learners' writing performance and attitudes (Sajjadpour, 2021). Additionally, the tool's ability to greatly enhance students' writing quality, evidenced by a rise in test scores from 34 to 77 out of 100, underscores its effectiveness as an AI-powered writing assistant (Fitria, 2021).

Research by Dizon and Gayed (2021), Huang et al. (2020), and Prasetya and Raharjo (2023) explored how Grammarly can be useful in developing writing skills, its effectiveness on identifying grammatical errors and how it makes a writing a quality one, however, there are students who negatively perceived Grammarly due to the nature of feedback it offers (Faisal & Carabella, 2023). Thus, to address this gap, this study focuses on identifying the effectiveness of Grammarly feedback system through knowing the limitations that requires further enhancement. This systematic review will explore the various feature, benefits and challenges of using Grammarly in the context of academic writing on ESL/EFL students. This review will identify relevant literature from the year 2009 until 2024. By examining different studies, researchers may know Grammarly's impact on writing performance, user perceptions, and educational outcomes. Moreover, the review aims to provide a comprehensive un-

derstanding of how Grammarly can be effectively integrated into ESL/EFL students to improve students' writing skills. Through the synthesis of existing research, this review seeks to highlight the potential of Grammarly as a transformative tool in the academic writing landscape (Maulidina & Wibowo, 2022; Raskova, 2023; Huang et al., 2020).

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a systematic literature review to assess Grammarly's effectiveness as an Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tool for enhancing writing skills in ESL/EFL students. A systematic literature review provides a comprehensive summary of all relevant primary research, delivering the most reliable evidence by identifying, evaluating, and combining existing studies (Clarke, 2011; Krupinski, 2019). As described by Armstrong et al. (2011), this method follows a structured process that includes developing a research question, locating relevant studies, evaluating their quality, and integrating the results. This approach improves the reliability of findings by reducing biases and ensuring transparency (Williams et al., 2021).

Using a systematic literature review is well-suited for this study because it enables a thorough examination of current research on Grammarly's impact on writing skills. By methodically analyzing and combining evidence from various studies, the review will offer reliable insights that support decision-making and guide future research (Krupinski, 2019). This method ensures that any gaps in existing knowledge are identified, definitions are clarified, and a comprehensive understanding of Grammarly's effects on writing performance in ESL/EFL settings is achieved (Clarke, 2011).

Research Question

Grammarly offers immediate grammar corrections, style suggestions, and vocabulary enhancements, making it a valuable resource for improving writing accuracy and fluency. However, its impact on the writing skills to EFL/ESL students is still under investigation. This review seeks to determine whether existing re-

search has examined Grammarly's effectiveness in enhancing writing skills, including the effect of its feedback system. In particular, this systematic review will address the following research questions:

1. What features define the studies included in this review?
2. What benefits does Grammarly offer specifically for improving writing skills?
3. What difficulties or challenges do EFL/ESL students face when using Grammarly?
4. What research gaps can be identified from the studies reviewed?

Search Strategy

The systematic literature review's search strategy included utilizing multiple key databases to gather pertinent sources. Google Scholar, ERIC, Academia, and Semantic Scholar were the databases utilized. These platforms were chosen for their wide array of academic literature, allowing for a thorough search for research related to how Grammarly can help enhance the writing abilities of ESL/EFL students.

In order to collect appropriate literature, a wide range of keywords was used during the search procedure. The search phrases, such as "Grammarly as AI-powered writing assistant," led to 11 articles on Google Scholar; "Role of Grammarly in assessing EFL writing," resulted in 9 articles on Google Scholar; "Grammarly as automated writing," produced 14 articles on Google Scholar; "Grammarly's Impact," yielded 18 articles on Semantic Scholar; "Grammarly Assist ESL students in writing," yielded 7 articles on Academia; "Grammarly and writing skills," resulted in 3 articles on ERIC; and "Grammarly and Academic Writing," led to 6 articles on ERIC. This broad array of keywords resulted in the discovery of 68 articles from different databases, covering a wide range of

studies on Grammarly's impact and efficiency in assisting ESL and EFL students with writing.

Quality, Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the quality and rigor of the studies included in this review, the evaluation focused on research conducted within secondary and higher education institutions. These settings offer rich contexts for analyzing Grammarly's effectiveness in enhancing writing skills, particularly for ESL/EFL students. Specific attention was given to studies that demonstrated measurable outcomes, such as improvements in writing scores, user satisfaction, or other tangible indicators of writing proficiency. The inclusion of only those studies that present clear, quantifiable results ensures that the research selected provides substantial evidence of Grammarly's impact and relevance in educational settings.

In assessing the quality of the studies, the review considered several key factors: (1) Studies employing robust research designs—such as randomized controlled trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental designs, or mixed-method approaches—were prioritized to ensure the validity of findings, (2) The inclusion of studies with diverse and representative samples, particularly those with a significant ESL/EFL population, was essential to capture a wide range of Grammarly's potential impacts, (3) Only studies that provided detailed, clear, and replicable outcome measures, such as pre- and post-intervention writing assessments, were considered, and (4) To further ensure quality, only peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and theses from credible academic sources were included. Non-peer-reviewed sources or informal studies were excluded to prevent the inclusion of biased or unsupported findings. To complement the quality criteria, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers published between 2018 and 2024 • Scientific papers, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and theses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers published prior to 2018 • Non-scientific documents such as book chapters, magazine articles, blog posts, and other non-peer-reviewed sources

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers that include the keywords "Grammarly," "ESL," "EFL," "writing skills," "academic writing," "writing proficiency," and "Grammarly and writing skills" • Papers published in English • Open access papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers unrelated to Grammarly's impact on writing skills in ESL/EFL contexts • Papers not published in English • Papers that require payment for access

The PRISMA flowchart is a standardized tool created to illustrate the process of identifying, screening, and incorporating studies in a systematic review or meta-analysis. It enhances visibility and understanding by detailing every stage, from the initial investigation to the ultimate incorporation of research. The criteria for selection consist of four stages of filtering. In the beginning, 68 records were found. In the screening phase, a total of 24 duplicates

were identified. Following careful evaluation, 27 records were removed due to being irrelevant, resulting in a total of 17 articles for further assessment of eligibility. As a result, 7 records were eliminated because they were generally formatted, required payment, and emphasized traditional instructions, leaving 10 studies included in this systematic literature review.

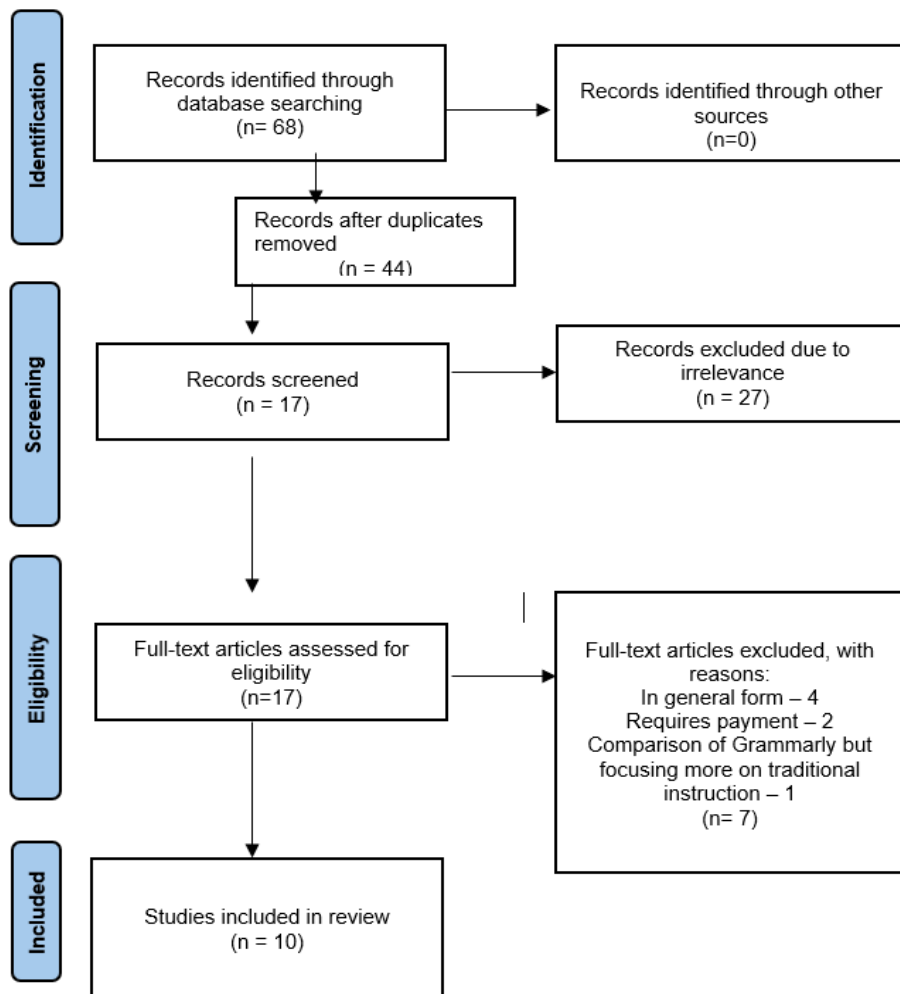


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

Result and Discussion

Features of the Studies

An overview of research on Grammarly’s effectiveness in improving writing skills for ESL/EFL students is given by examining vari-

ous studies. These studies differed in their design, country of origin, and participant grade levels. The table below summarizes the key features of each study included in this systematic literature review.

Table 1. Features of the Studies

Study	Study Design	Country	Grade Level
Armanda et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Japan	Tertiary
Dewi (2023)	Quantitative	Malaysia	Tertiary
Dizon and Gayed (2021)	Mixed	Indonesia	Secondary
Fan (2023)	Qualitative	Philippines	Tertiary
Ghufron and Rosyida (2018)	Quantitative	USA	Tertiary
Guba et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Japan	Tertiary
Huang et al. (2020)	Qualitative	Indonesia	Secondary
Miranty et al. (2021)	Mixed	Indonesia	Secondary
Prasetya and Raharjo (2023)	Quantitative	UK	Tertiary
Setyani et al. (2023)	Qualitative	Australia	Secondary

In this review, there are a total of 10 studies. Among these, 5 studies are quantitative, 3 studies are qualitative, and 2 studies are mixed-methods. Most of the studies come from Indonesia, with a total of 3 studies. The majority of the studies focus on tertiary-level education, with 6 studies conducted at this level. The breakdown of studies by country is as follows: Indonesia (3) Japan (2), Malaysia (1), Philippines (1), USA (1), UK (1), and Australia (1).

Benefits of Using Grammarly to Improve Writing Skills

Grammarly has been acknowledged for its many advantages in enhancing the writing abilities of ESL/EFL students. This section discusses the main themes found in the research: error detection and correction, immediate and personalized feedback, user-friendliness and accessibility, and autonomous learning and confidence.

Error Detection and Correction

Grammarly’s ability to detect and correct grammatical, punctuation, and spelling mistakes has consistently been noted as one of its strongest features, particularly for ESL/EFL learners. Armanda et al. (2022) found that Grammarly’s instant error detection helped students improve the precision of their writing, a finding echoed by Dewi (2023), who observed

a significant reduction in grammatical mistakes, thereby enhancing overall text quality. Similarly, Guba et al. (2024) also highlighted Grammarly’s strong error correction features as contributing to improved writing abilities. Comparatively, Ghufron and Rosyida (2018) took this analysis further, demonstrating that Grammarly was more effective at reducing errors in vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation than conventional teacher feedback. This comparative analysis shows that while all studies agree on Grammarly’s strength in error correction, Ghufron and Rosyida’s work underscores its superiority over traditional feedback mechanisms, providing a unique insight into its practical classroom application.

Immediate and Personalized Feedback

One of Grammarly’s core benefits is its ability to provide immediate feedback, which fosters better learning and retention by allowing students to correct errors in real time. Armanda et al. (2022) emphasized that real-time feedback significantly improved student writing skills. Prasetya and Raharjo (2023) focused on personalized feedback, noting that it contributed to greater grammatical accuracy and vocabulary improvement. This theme of personalized feedback was also highlighted by Miranty et al. (2021), who found that students

appreciated the detailed explanations of their errors, aiding better understanding. Huang et al. (2020) further confirmed the software's supportive role, underscoring its accessibility and ease of use. When comparing these findings, it becomes evident that while all studies praise Grammarly's immediacy, Prasetya and Raharjo (2023) and Miranty et al. (2021) place greater emphasis on the tailored nature of the feedback, suggesting that this individualized support may have a more profound impact on learning outcomes than the tool's speed alone.

User-Friendliness and Accessibility

The user-friendliness and accessibility of Grammarly have been frequently mentioned as important factors contributing to its success in improving writing skills. Armanda et al. (2022) noted that students found Grammarly easy to navigate, which enhanced their learning experience. Dewi (2023) observed that the tool's simplicity increased students' confidence in their writing abilities. Fan (2023) similarly reported that Grammarly's interface contributed to better learning outcomes and boosted students' confidence. Setyani et al. (2023) also discussed how Grammarly's accessibility facilitated immediate corrections and feedback, thereby improving writing skills. A comparison of these findings indicates a consistent agreement across the studies regarding Grammarly's ease of use. However, Dewi (2023) and Fan (2023) placed additional emphasis on the psychological benefits of Grammarly's simplicity, highlighting increased confidence as an important outcome that might be underrepresented in studies that focus primarily on technical effectiveness.

Autonomous Learning and Confidence

Grammarly promotes autonomous learning by empowering students to self-correct their writing, leading to improved skills over time. Ghufon and Rosyida (2018) emphasized that Grammarly supports independent learning, allowing students to learn at their own pace. Dewi (2023) observed that students gained greater confidence in their writing through continued use of Grammarly, as the tool provided reassurance of grammatical accuracy. Similarly, Dizon and Gayed (2021) highlighted

how Grammarly encourages self-improvement and fosters a deeper understanding of writing errors. Comparing these findings, it is clear that all studies recognize Grammarly's role in promoting independent learning, but Dewi (2023) and Dizon and Gayed (2021) bring particular attention to the psychological benefits—specifically increased confidence—suggesting that Grammarly's influence may extend beyond technical skill development to impact students' self-assurance and motivation.

Challenges ESL/EFL Students Face When Using Grammarly

Despite its benefits, Grammarly also presents several challenges for ESL/EFL students. The themes identified in the review include over-reliance on technology, limited scope of feedback, technical and accessibility issues, and time management and usability.

Over-Reliance on Technology

One major concern is that students may become overly reliant on Grammarly, which could hinder their development of independent editing skills. Armanda et al. (2022) expressed concerns that students might depend too much on Grammarly, thus impacting their ability to self-edit. Dizon and Gayed (2021) echoed this worry, noting that excessive reliance on the tool might inhibit the learning process. Guba et al. (2024) and Fan (2023) reiterated these concerns, with Fan also noting that the focus on grammatical accuracy might overlook deeper issues like logical flow and content quality. When comparing these findings, it's clear that while all studies agree on the risk of over-reliance, Fan (2023) provides a broader critique by highlighting that Grammarly's focus on surface-level issues could detract from students' engagement with more complex aspects of writing. This suggests that future research should examine how Grammarly can be integrated with more holistic writing instruction to mitigate this risk.

Limited Scope of Feedback

While Grammarly excels at correcting surface-level errors, it is less effective at addressing higher-order writing skills like content development and argumentation. Ghufon and

Rosyida (2018) noted that the tool was limited in its ability to improve content organization and coherence. Similarly, Huang et al. (2020) found that Grammarly's feedback tended to focus on surface-level issues, neglecting more substantive writing concerns. Miranty et al. (2021) and Dewi (2023) also pointed out that while Grammarly is beneficial for basic corrections, it does not sufficiently address deeper writing challenges such as critical thinking and argumentation. It is evident that all researchers agree on Grammarly's limitations in handling more complex writing issues. However, Ghufon and Rosyida (2018) and Dewi (2023) emphasize the importance of supplementary instruction to fill these gaps, suggesting that Grammarly should not be seen as a replacement for comprehensive writing support.

Technical and Accessibility Issues

Technical difficulties and limited access to technology can hinder students' ability to fully benefit from Grammarly. Dewi (2023) noted that students without consistent access to technology may struggle to use the tool effectively. Similarly, Miranty et al. (2021) highlighted that technical issues could impede the effective use of Grammarly. Setyani et al. (2023) discussed the digital divide, warning that disparities in access to technology could lead to unequal learning outcomes. Prasetya and Raharjo (2023) also pointed out that while Grammarly is helpful, its use must be managed carefully to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities. This reveals that while technical issues are a universal concern, Setyani et al. (2023) provide a broader perspective by highlighting the socio-economic dimension of this challenge, suggesting that access to Grammarly may be uneven across different student populations.

Time Management and Usability

Time Management and Usability

Managing Grammarly's feedback can be time-consuming for both students and educators. Prasetya and Raharjo (2023) argued that while Grammarly is effective, it should complement rather than replace traditional instruction due to the time required to incorporate feedback. Armanda et al. (2022) similarly highlighted the challenge of time management,

noting that students could find it overwhelming to address all the feedback. Guba et al. (2024) also pointed out that inconsistent access to technology could result in disparities in students' ability to use Grammarly efficiently. The issue of time management appears consistently across studies. However, Guba et al. (2024) introduce an important accessibility factor that complicates the usability of Grammarly, emphasizing that both time constraints and technology access need to be considered in any discussion of the tool's effectiveness.

Research Gaps

Psychological and Emotional Effects of Grammarly Feedback

While Grammarly's technical benefits, such as error correction and personalized feedback, have been thoroughly examined, there is a notable gap in research addressing the psychological and emotional impacts of its feedback. Studies like those by Ghufon and Rosyida (2018) and Dizon and Gayed (2021) have primarily concentrated on the tool's technical efficacy, leaving unexplored how Grammarly affects students' self-esteem, anxiety levels, and attitudes toward writing. These emotional factors can significantly influence student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in language learning contexts where writing anxiety and self-confidence are critical variables. Understanding the psychological dimension of Grammarly's feedback could provide insights into whether it promotes a positive or negative emotional learning environment. For instance, does Grammarly's automated correction system increase students' confidence in their writing abilities, or does it, conversely, heighten anxiety due to constant error notifications?

The implications of this research gap are substantial. If Grammarly's feedback is found to have adverse emotional effects, educators may need to supplement its use with strategies that mitigate potential negative impacts, such as providing human feedback alongside the tool or fostering a more supportive learning environment. Future research should aim to explore how students emotionally respond to Grammarly's feedback and how those responses affect long-term writing development. Investigating factors like self-esteem, writing

anxiety, and motivation could reveal whether certain student populations—such as beginner writers or those with high anxiety—are more vulnerable to negative emotional outcomes. Addressing this gap could lead to more diverse guidance on how Grammarly should be implemented to foster both technical skill development and positive emotional engagement.

Subject-Specific Impact

Another critical gap in the existing literature concerns the lack of investigation into Grammarly's subject-specific effectiveness. Most studies assess the tool's general ability to enhance writing proficiency in ESL/EFL students without exploring its impact across different academic disciplines. Writing requirements vary significantly across fields like sciences, humanities, social sciences, and technical disciplines, each of which demands different levels of precision, clarity, and argumentation. Huang et al. (2020) touched upon this issue, suggesting the need to explore whether Grammarly's automated feedback is equally effective for all subjects or if certain disciplines require more tailored feedback approaches.

Future research should investigate Grammarly's effectiveness in various academic disciplines, focusing on whether its feedback supports the specific writing conventions and requirements of each field. By addressing this gap, studies could contribute to the development of more discipline-sensitive applications of Grammarly, potentially leading to customized feedback features that cater to the diverse needs of students across academic subjects. This would enhance the tool's relevance and effectiveness, making it a more versatile resource for students in a wide range of fields.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review underscores the relevance of Cognitive Load Theory for evaluating Grammarly's impact on the writing skills of ESL/EFL students. Theoretically, the findings align with the theory, as Grammarly's real-time feedback and error correction features aim to alleviate cognitive load by reducing the mental effort required to independently identify and rectify writing errors.

Practically, the evidence demonstrates Grammarly's effectiveness in enhancing writing proficiency, with research showing significant improvements in both writing accuracy and student confidence. Nevertheless, challenges such as over-reliance on the tool and its limited scope of feedback highlight areas for further improvement. Grammarly proves to be a valuable resource for improving writing skills, but its use could be complemented by traditional instructional methods to address its limitations and maximize overall effectiveness.

Recommendations for policy and practice

Schools may continue using Grammarly as a supplementary resource in writing curricula while ensuring it supports rather than replaces traditional instruction methods. They may also consider conducting long-term studies to assess Grammarly's impact on students' writing skills over multiple academic years, as these studies could help determine the tool's effectiveness and guide future policies and practices. Additionally, organizing Grammarly-based competitions where students use the tool to refine their submissions may promote engagement and enhance skill development. Competitions structured around various writing genres or themes can encourage diverse writing practice while integrating Grammarly's feedback.

Recommendations for future research

A limitation of the study is the reliance on peer-reviewed and published studies, which may have resulted in the exclusion of valuable but unpublished or non-traditionally published research, such as institutional reports or working papers. To address this, future reviews could incorporate a broader search strategy, including gray literature sources, such as theses, dissertations, and conference presentations. This would help capture more diverse findings, especially those that may not have undergone formal publication but still contribute valuable insights into Grammarly's impact on writing skills.

Another limitation is the restriction to English-language studies, which could lead to the exclusion of critical research conducted in non-

English speaking regions where ESL/EFL contexts are especially relevant. To minimize this language bias, future reviews could expand the scope to include studies published in other widely spoken languages, particularly those from countries where English is commonly taught as a second language. This could be achieved by collaborating with bilingual reviewers or using translation services to screen and include non-English studies. By broadening the linguistic range of included studies, the review would present a more comprehensive and globally representative picture of Grammarly's effectiveness in enhancing writing skills in ESL/EFL students.

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