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The impact of using Grammarly in teaching writing skills of Iranian advanced EFL students

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Abstract

Strengthening writing skills in a second language is one of the most challenging issues. It's because many people are not able to write different texts even in their first language. Writing is a complex and important skill and only develops when students become familiar with how to write and have the opportunity to practice this skill. The current study aimed to investigate the effect of using Grammarly software on strengthening the writing skills of Advanced students in one of the language schools in Tabriz. The method of this research is experimental according to the studied groups. The population of Advanced level language learners in Tabriz Guftagoo Language Center randomly formed a statistical sample. After analyzing and comparing the mean scores of the groups, the effect of Grammarly software training on strengthening writing skills was confirmed. On the other hand, e-learning has increased students' interest in writing skills.

Keywords: Grammarly, Iranian Advanced EFL Students, Writing Skill

Introduction

Perspectives on language teaching and learning have changed significantly in recent years. Knowing a foreign language or a second language, especially English as an international language is important nowadays. English language teaching in Iran has always been an important issue, but the result has never been satisfactory. This dissatisfaction has several factors, including the old teaching methods, lack of motivation, insufficient educational content, etc. (Birjampour, 2008) ^[2]. Traditional teaching methods have many limitations and weaknesses and therefore cannot motivate students. Writing skill is the most complex language skill for learners, and the learner learns the skill of conveying a message in the form of writing. This skill has different levels that lead to creative writing in the last step.

The use of computers and technological tools in language teaching has created a new stage in language teaching and learning. Communicating computer science and linguistics (Naraghizadeh and Barimani, 2013) will lead to good results for educators and linguists. This in itself will lead to the provision of a suitable platform for more effective and principled teaching. With the use of computers in English language teaching, individual differences that have long been discussed in education are reduced, and if in traditional education teachers do not have enough time to get to know students and work with them individually, computers can create opportunities and provide diverse experiences. Grammarly software is a platform based on artificial intelligence, which was introduced in 2009 in Ukraine by (Max Lytvyn & Alex Shevchenko) to detect errors and prevent plagiarism. Grammarly is a simple program that you can create an account with your personal email without any problems and use the software services.

Grammarly can correct grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors in English writing, with these advantages, the Grammarly application has positively impacted the quality of students' English (Pratama, 2021) ^[10]. There is a lot of research about these artificial intelligence-based applications on EFL students writing skills through online-based learning (Amin Mubarak Ahmad Syafi, 2021). The result caused the learners to improve their writing skills by producing learners' own words and styles. Other similar studies (Delsa Miranty, Utami Widiati, 20.....) studied the impact of Grammarly application in teaching writing to Indonesian EFL students and the result showed that the writing performance of the experimental group was enhanced by using Grammarly.

Soleimani (2016) [8] studied the effects of both teachers and Grammarly application on teaching passive structures to Iranian EFL learners and the result of the pre-post-test showed that the effects of teachers on teaching passive structures were more than the effect of Grammarly, however in delayed post-test Grammarly was more effective than teachers. Dizon and Gayed (2021) [4] studied the effects of Grammarly on the mobile writing quality of EFL students in Japan, the results revealed that Grammarly is very effective on EFL learners' mobile writing and they make fewer errors in their writing.

Research Question

1. Are there any significant differences on Iranian EFL learners' writing scores after using Grammarly software?
2. What are the Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward using Grammarly software in their writing classes?

Methodology

Setting and Participants

This study has an experimental design that was conducted for six weeks. EFL writing course in an English school in Tabriz, Iran. The participants were randomly designed after taking part in a homogenized test. The participants were divided into experimental and control groups. There were 12 participants in the control group and 15 participants in the experimental group. The experimental group took part in EFL writing classes based on using Grammarly, while the control groups'

classes were based on pen and paper.

Data Collection

The participants were asked to write a text about environmental treats as a pre-test. Then during the course, the instructor taught the lessons related to the topic. In the last week, the instructor asked the participants to write a text with the same topic as in the pre-test. The writing papers were scored using an analytic scoring rubric. For gathering more information about using Grammarly in writing classes and to find out learners' attitudes toward using Grammarly, an online questionnaire was administered among the participants. The questionnaire included 10 Likert scale questions. To examine the validity and reliability of the instrument the researcher used the SPSS program and Chronbach Alpha.

Data analysis Procedure

The researcher analyzed and compared the participant's pre-post-test scores by the SPSS program and in order to analyze the participants' performance after treatment, the researcher calculated the gain score. In the final stage, the responses to the questionnaire were analyzed by the researcher.

Findings

In order to obtain the mean scores of the writing essays pre-post-test, the researchers used paired sample T-test and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The effectiveness of Grammarly application to improve the writting skill of the participants

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Paired-samples test			
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	Sig.
Experimental group	72	88	3.12	.51	38	.000

According to Table 1, the experimental class's participants' writing scores were increased after the treatment in the post-test. The pre-test with a mean score of 72 and the post-test with a mean score of 88 show this reality. Therefore using the

Grammarly software is very helpful for students writing skills.

In Table 2 we can see the result of participants writing skill from pre-test to post-test.

Table 2: Paired t-test Results (Pre-test and Post-test from Control Class)

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Paired-samples test			
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	Sig.
Control Group	71	84	5.12	.75	38	.000

According to Table 2, the writing performance of the control group become better after the traditional teaching method. Although the mean scores of the pre-post-tests have small differences the mean score of the post-test proves that the

traditional teaching methods affected the participants writing skills.

Table 3 shows the effectiveness of the Grammarly software on students' writing skills by using the Gain score.

Table 3: Experimental and control groups gain scores

Group	Mean (percentage)	Std. Error
Experimental Group	53.4	1.26
Control Group	47.36	2.31

According to Table 3, the Gain score of the experimental group with a mean score of (53.4) was more than the score of the control group (47.36). So teaching writing skills by using Grammarly software was more effective than teaching

writing by a traditional method.

For analysis of the questionnaire, the participant's answers to the questions are calculated in Table 4.

Table 4. The Results of the questionnaire

Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
3.01	5.12	3.72	0.348

Questionnaire

	Questions	Mean
1	Grammarly was a user-friendly software.	3.87
2	I didn't need someone else to help in using Grammarly	4.2
3	Grammarly provided understandable feedback	3.43
4	I find Grammarly software very useful for improving my writing skill	3.82
5	Grammarly gives detailed feedback	3.54
6	Grammarly makes a helpful suggestion for improving my work	3.62
7	Grammarly gives good explanations about my error	2.96
8	Grammarly has helped me understand the grammar rules	3.25
9	Grammarly didn't give misleading feedback	4.05
10	Grammarly has helped me learn more synonyms	2.7

The mean score of the participant's responses to questions is presented in Table 4. According to Table 4, the participants are really satisfied with using this software in writing classes. Question 2 with the highest mean score (4.2) shows that participants find Grammarly very easy to use and question 10 with the mean score (2.7) shows that sometimes students didn't find the information that gain through Grammarly understandable.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to compare the impact of writing education through Grammarly with the traditional method on the development of students' writing skills. The Result showed that this application had a positive effect on the writing skills of participants and also participants felt more self-confident in their writing by using it. The participants in this study were eager to take part in this kind of study because they find it effective and interesting. Therefore, using the Grammarly program in writing classes improves the students' writing skills and provides better learning opportunities. It is necessary to revise traditional methods of education to improve student's learning skills and technology-based methods and programs should be used as much as possible. Also, considering the effect of CALL computer use and appropriate software on the progress of learners and the attractiveness of classes, it is better to provide appropriate and useful software to English language teachers and to organize appropriate training courses for teachers to fully familiarize themselves with similar software.

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