

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The rapid development of technology has significantly impacted various aspects of education, including the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL). In Indonesia, English is considered a critical subject in secondary schools as it plays a pivotal role in preparing students to compete in the globalized world (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). However, despite years of instruction, many students still struggle with understanding English texts, which often hinders their overall language proficiency. These challenges are attributed to limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and a lack of reading strategies (Rahman et al., 2020).

Digital tools, such as Grammarly, have emerged as potential solutions to address these challenges by providing real-time feedback on writing and grammar. Grammarly, an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered writing assistant, offers suggestions for improving grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. Studies indicate that such tools can support learners in recognizing and correcting errors, thereby fostering better comprehension and production of English texts (O'Neill & Russell, 2019). Despite its growing popularity, limited research has been conducted on the application of Grammarly in secondary school contexts, particularly in rural Indonesian schools like SMPN 5 Simpang Empat Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Writing descriptive text is a fundamental skill in language learning that involves describing objects, people, places, or events in detail to create a clear image in the reader's mind. For EFL learners, mastering the ability to write descriptive text is essential as it helps them express their ideas clearly and creatively while also enhancing their vocabulary and grammatical accuracy (Hammond, 1996). Descriptive writing not only improves students' ability to convey detailed information but also stimulates their imagination and critical thinking skills. Writing is one of the four core skills that students are expected to master when learning English. It is a crucial skill for academic success and plays a significant role in communication, both in academic and professional contexts. Descriptive writing, in particular, is an essential aspect of English writing as it enables students to express ideas, thoughts, and experiences in a clear, detailed, and organized manner. For Indonesian students, writing descriptive texts can be especially challenging due to several factors, such as limited vocabulary, lack of exposure to the language, and the absence of systematic guidance in applying grammatical rules effectively.

At SMPN 5 Simpang Empat, students are required to write descriptive texts, but many face difficulties in structuring their writing, maintaining coherence, and using correct grammar. These challenges are exacerbated by the lack of access to modern educational tools and resources, which limits their opportunities to practice and refine their writing skills. In this context, digital tools like Grammarly could play a pivotal role in helping students develop their writing abilities, specifically in writing descriptive texts.

Grammarly is an artificial intelligence-powered digital writing assistant designed to help users improve their writing skills by offering real-time feedback on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. This tool analyzes text and provides suggestions to enhance clarity, correctness, and overall quality. It uses natural language processing (NLP) technology to identify errors and propose corrections, ensuring that the text adheres to standard English conventions. Grammarly's versatility makes it applicable in various contexts, including academic, professional, and casual communication (Li & Hegelheimer, 2013). One of the key features of Grammarly is its ability to provide immediate, user-friendly feedback. The tool highlights errors directly in the text and offers explanations for each suggestion, enabling users to learn from their mistakes. This pedagogical aspect empowers users, especially students, to develop a deeper understanding of grammatical rules and improve their writing autonomy over time. Furthermore, Grammarly's interface is accessible across multiple platforms, such as web browsers, desktop applications, and mobile devices, which ensures seamless integration into everyday writing tasks. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, Grammarly serves as an invaluable resource. It helps students identify and rectify common grammatical errors, such as subject-verb agreement, incorrect tense usage, and sentence structure issues. Moreover, the tool provides stylistic suggestions, encouraging students to enhance the tone and fluency of their writing. By using Grammarly, students can gain confidence in their ability to

produce accurate and coherent English texts (Mozgalina & Ryshina-Pankova, 2020).

Overall, Grammarly is not just a corrective tool but also an educational aid that enhances the learning process. Its ability to support error identification, provide constructive feedback, and promote self-directed learning makes it an essential component in modern language education. By leveraging Grammarly's features, students can overcome challenges in writing and comprehension, ultimately improving their overall English proficiency.

Research suggests that Grammarly can enhance students' writing skills and boost their confidence in using English. For instance, O'Neill and Russell (2019) found that university students who used Grammarly demonstrated significant improvements in grammatical accuracy and writing coherence. Similarly, Mozgalina and Ryshina-Pankova (2020) reported that Grammarly helped EFL learners identify recurring errors and develop a deeper understanding of grammatical structures. However, most of these studies focus on higher education settings, leaving a gap in understanding its effectiveness in secondary schools.

SMPN 5 Simpang Empat Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia is a rural secondary school located in an area where access to educational technology is limited. The school's English teachers face several challenges, including large class sizes, varying levels of student proficiency, and insufficient professional development opportunities. The large class sizes often hinder personalized instruction, making it difficult for teachers to address

individual student needs effectively. Additionally, students exhibit varying levels of proficiency in English, which poses challenges in creating a balanced learning environment that caters to both advanced and struggling learners. The lack of professional development opportunities further limits teachers' ability to integrate modern teaching methods and technological tools into their classrooms. Despite these constraints, there is a growing awareness of the potential benefits of integrating technology into English instruction to enhance students' learning experiences. With the introduction of tools like Grammarly, there is hope for addressing some of these challenges by providing students with real-time feedback and personalized support to improve their English proficiency. This study aims to investigate how such tools can be effectively utilized in rural school settings to bridge gaps in English language instruction.

This study specifically focuses on SMPN 5 Simpang Empat in Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. This particular school was chosen because it represents a typical rural educational setting in Indonesia, facing unique challenges that limit students' writing proficiency. These challenges include large class sizes, which make personalized teacher feedback difficult; limited access to modern educational tools and technology; and varying levels of student proficiency. These factors often lead to students struggling with the structure, coherence, and grammatical accuracy of their descriptive writing. The absence of adequate resources and personalized support highlights a critical need to explore alternative, accessible solutions.

This study aims to explore the use of Grammarly as a tool to improve students' understanding in writing descriptive texts among 8th-grade students at SMPN 5 Simpang Empat, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. By investigating the tool's impact on grammar awareness and writing skills, this research seeks to provide practical insights for teachers and policymakers on leveraging digital tools to address the challenges of EFL instruction in rural contexts.

The chosen title, "Student's Perception Of Using Grammarly to Enhance the Accuracy in writing Descriptive Text at Smpn 5 Simpang Empat, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia," reflects the study's primary focus and context. This title was selected to highlight the role of Grammarly in improving students' writing skills, particularly in crafting descriptive texts, and to address the challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in a rural educational setting.

The rapid advancement of technology has revolutionized various aspects of education, including EFL teaching and learning. In Indonesia, English is a critical subject in secondary schools as it equips students with essential skills for global competitiveness. However, despite its importance, many students, particularly those in rural areas like SMPN 5 Simpang Empat, face challenges in writing descriptive texts. These difficulties often arise from limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and insufficient exposure to English outside the classroom. Focusing on 8th-grade students in this study is strategic, as this group represents a crucial stage in secondary education where

the development of effective writing skills is necessary to support their future academic success, particularly in producing coherent and accurate descriptive texts.

Grammarly, an AI-powered writing assistant, has been widely recognized as an effective tool for enhancing language proficiency. While existing studies have explored its application in higher education settings, limited research has focused on its impact on secondary school students, particularly in rural Indonesian schools with restricted access to educational technology. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how Grammarly can improve students' understanding of writing descriptive texts in English. By investigating its potential to address challenges such as grammatical inaccuracies and limited vocabulary, the study aims to provide practical insights for enhancing EFL instruction in rural contexts, offering a valuable resource for educators and policymakers looking to integrate digital tools into secondary education.

Additionally, the study seeks to highlight the specific challenges and opportunities associated with Grammarly's use in enhancing students' ability to write descriptive texts and their overall grammar awareness. This focus aligns with current educational priorities in Indonesia, where integrating digital tools into classrooms is increasingly encouraged to address challenges in language learning. The title captures the essence of the study by emphasizing its purpose, target population, and geographical context, making it relevant to educators, policymakers, and readers. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to

innovative, technology-driven solutions for improving English language education in rural settings, fostering a more effective and engaging learning environment for secondary school students.

1.2. Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

1. How does the use of Grammarly influence students' perceptions of accuracy in writing descriptive texts at SMPN 5 Simpang Empat, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia?
2. What challenges and opportunities do students face in using Grammarly to improve the accuracy of their descriptive text writing at SMPN 5 Simpang Empat?

1.3. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate how the use of Grammarly influences students' perceptions of accuracy in writing descriptive texts at SMPN 5 Simpang Empat, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia.
2. To identify the challenges and opportunities that students encounter while using Grammarly to enhance the accuracy of their descriptive text writing.

1.4. Research Significances

There are several uses that the researcher wants to provide from this research:

1. This study can provide practical guidance for teachers in integrating Grammarly as a technological tool to enhance students' writing skills and understanding of descriptive texts in rural schools.
2. This research can help students improve their ability to write and comprehend English descriptive texts through the use of digital tools that provide real-time feedback and corrective suggestions.
3. This research can inform policymakers about the effectiveness of digital tools like Grammarly in improving writing and reading comprehension in EFL instruction, particularly in rural Indonesian schools.
4. This research is expected to contribute to theoretical studies on the application of AI-powered tools in secondary school education, serving as a reference for future studies in technology-enhanced language learning with a focus on writing and reading comprehension.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

There are some operational definitions of the key words in the study:

1. Grammarly: An artificial intelligence-powered digital writing assistant that provides real-time feedback on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. In this study, Grammarly is utilized as a tool to enhance students' writing skills and understanding of descriptive texts.
2. Descriptive Texts: A type of English text that describes a person, place, object, or event in detail, aiming to create a vivid picture for the reader. This study focuses on how students improve their writing and understanding of descriptive texts with the help of Grammarly.

3. English as a Foreign Language (EFL): The teaching and learning of English in a context where it is not the primary language of communication. This study is conducted within the EFL context of rural secondary schools in Indonesia.
4. SMPN 5 Simpang Empat, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia: A rural secondary school in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, where this study explores students' perceptions of Grammarly in enhancing their writing and comprehension of descriptive texts.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1. Conclusion

Grammarly significantly enhances students' writing accuracy, vocabulary, and metalinguistic awareness by serving as an intuitive, motivating, and pedagogically supportive digital scaffold that fosters self-reflection, language development, and strategic writing in descriptive texts.

Students at SMPN 5 Simpang Empat face challenges such as over-reliance, contextual rigidity, and cognitive overload when using Grammarly, they also experience significant opportunities including immediate feedback, increased language awareness, and enhanced autonomy in improving the accuracy of their descriptive writing.

5.2. Recommendation

It is recommended that teachers provide guided training sessions on how to use Grammarly effectively and critically, emphasizing its role as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for the students' own thinking, in order to balance technological assistance with independent writing skills development.

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