CANDIDATES' AND AWARDEES' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF GRAMMARLY IN GIVING FEEDBACK ON THE ENGLISH MOTIVATION LETTER TO APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP

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Abstract

Education is essential for humans' life. Some people want to study abroad to get a deeper and broader experience. So many people are looking for scholarships to lighten their tuition and living expenses. One of the crucial factors in the selection process of scholarships is a motivation letter as one of the requirements that must be made at the beginning of registration. Grammarly is one of the most used applications/software for English writing in this era. It may help the applicants to write their English motivation letter. This research aimed to investigate candidates' and awardees' perceptions on the use of Grammarly in providing feedback on the English motivation letter to apply for a scholarship. This research was conducted using explanatory design of mixed method. The random sampling method was used for surveying the participants, and there were 65 candidates and awardees of scholarships as the respondents of this survey. This survey found that the majority agreed Grammarly could give feedback to help the candidates and awardees to check their tone of writing, grammar, dictions for their motivation letters.
Keywords: Awardees, Candidates, Grammarly, Motivation Letter, Scholarships

Introduction

Education is a crucial part of humans' life. Education gives people opportunities to sharpen the critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Zamroni, Lasan & Hidayah, 2020). Those skills cannot be reached in a concise time because it requires a long time and process. Puspadjuita (2018) stated that in Indonesia, many sectors highly value education, one of which is employment. People with higher education are expected to have excellence in both scientific and experience fields to face the working world. It is undeniable that an established job is something that everyone dreams of. Some people are willing to pursue their dreams by going to higher education to get higher job positions and promotions (Puspadjuita, 2018). In fact, many people in Indonesia have started to go abroad to continue their education. As cited in Market Report Indonesia (2022), according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Indonesian students studying abroad have increased by 21% since 2014. There are 53,604 Indonesian students are studying abroad until February 2022. UNESCO Institute Statistics also mentioned that Australia, Malaysia, the USA, Japan, and the UK are the top five countries where Indonesian people study (Market Report Indonesia, 2022). Not only in terms of the position of work, but they go to study overseas to increase their knowledge and experience in the knowledge field they are in.

Studying abroad is tempting. Petzold and Moog (2018) said that people can deepen their knowledge, gain experience, and add to international relations. However, Petzold and Moog (2018) also added that studying abroad requires a lot of living costs and tuition. Therefore, many people are trying to apply for scholarships. Scholarships offer funding for studying abroad (Roberts, 2010). There are many scholarship providers. The costs borne by the scholarship provider are also not the same (Virtue, Ellerbrock, & Main, 2020). However, Maharaja (2018)

mentioned that scholarships help ease the burden for those who want to study abroad. To become an awardee of a scholarship, a person will go through many selection processes (Ruminar, Gayatri & Prasetyaningrum, 2020). The motivation letter is one thing candidates must prepare adequately in the selection process (Galloway, 2018). Usually, people have to write an English motivation letter to apply for a scholarship to study abroad. Galloway (2018) told that a motivation letter requires candidates to demonstrate their personality and explain why they are qualified.

Writing is a productive and also challenging skill to master because it requires a high level of cognitive and language abilities (Faller, 2018; Fitria, 2021; Maharani, 2018). Indonesians as English Foreign Language (EFL) learners may make errors in several aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar when writing and finishing an English sentence or essay (Fitria, 2020). In this century, there are several tools to help justify English writings online. One of the most frequently used is Grammarly (Nova, 2018). Grammarly provides many features for writing, including grammar, diction, word effectiveness, and tone checking (Syafi'i, 2020). It has both free and paid checking features. For free Grammarly, it will only provide suggestions on grammar errors, dictions, and word effectiveness (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018). Grammarly has automated feedback features that can be seen directly by its users (Karyuatry, (2018). However, these features can help candidates and awardees of scholarships to write their motivation letters.

There are so many studies that researched the use of Grammarly in improving students' writing skills; as written by Koltovskaia (2020) about student engagement with automated written corrective feedback provided by Grammarly and Barrot (2020) about integrating technology into ESL/EFL writing through Grammarly. However, the researcher focused on the use of Grammarly in giving feedback on the English motivation letter to apply for a scholarship which is still very rarely studied by other researchers. This research aimed to investigate candidates' and awardees' perceptions on the use of Grammarly in providing feedback on the English motivation letter to apply for a scholarship.

Method

A. Research Design

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) mentioned that mixed-method research focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (p.32). Using the research combination provides a chance to have a better understanding of research problems compared to the approach on its own or alone (Cohen, et al., 2018). This research also gives a more prosperous, broader, and more profound knowledge about a problem (Creswell & Clark, 2018).
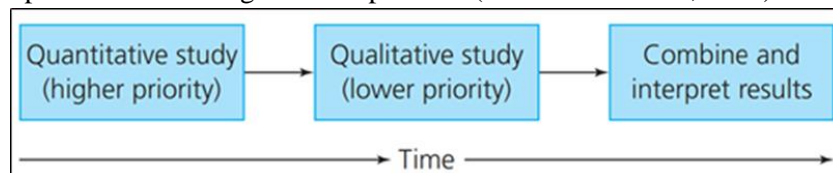

Figure 1. Explanatory Design

The researcher employed an explanatory design as a type of mixed-method research in this study. After getting all data, the researcher combined all the answers from the quantitative and qualitative data to interpret the results.

B. Data Sources

In conducting the study, the researcher used mixed method to get the data. The researcher used a questionnaire to get the quantitative data and also some short essay questions to collect the qualitative data. The participants of this study were all candidates and awardees of scholarships who gathered in a WhatsApp group, named 'Sharing *Beasiswa Luar Negeri*'. There were 65 respondents out of 186 people who filled out the questionnaire. Those were candidates and awardees of LPDP, Rusia Government Scholarship, Erasmus, Chevening, Fulbright scholarship, and many others.

C. Data Collecting Technique

The researcher made a questionnaire that consists of two parts; 19 questions of multiple choices (5-points Likert scale) for quantitative data and 7 questions of short essays for qualitative data. Researchers distributed online questionnaires using Google form since February 1st-8th, 2022 through WhatsApp group and personal messages.

D. Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, the researcher counted the average score of each engagement. Then analyse the result of the quantitative data. For the qualitative data, the researcher tried to resume all the answers.

E. Instruments

The main theory for conducting the data was taken from Koltoyskaia (2020) who wrote three engagements in writing using Grammarly. The three engagements are behavioural, cognitive, and affective engagements (Koltoyskaia, 2020). Behavioural engagement focuses on feelings about ease of access and getting feedback to improve the writings. Cognitive engagement concerns how students can compose writing and learn from the feedback given. Affective engagement is concerned with students' immediate emotional reactions and attitudinal reactions to automated feedback. For the quantitative data, there were seven questions for behavioural engagement, six questions for cognitive engagement, and six question for affective engagement. For the qualitative data, there were three questions for behavioural engagement, two questions for cognitive engagement, and two questions for affective engagement.

Findings and Discussions

1. Quantitative Data

Table 1. The Average of Engagements

ENGAGEMENTS	AVERAGE SCORE
Behavioural Engagement	3.75
Cognitive Engagement	4
Affective Engagement	4.5

There were 65 people who filled out the questionnaire that consisted of 33,8% (n=22) candidates and 66.2% (n=43) awardees of scholarships. The researcher used 5-points Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) which means the minimum score of the average of each engagement is one (1) and the maximum score is five (5).

Based on the data above, it shows that behavioural engagement gets the lowest score. There are some reasons why behavioural engagement of Grammarly is low because the features are limited for the free checking feature – if the users want to get maximum result, they have to pay it, and for some people it is a little bit pricey – and it requires internet for accessing the software. The next one, cognitive engagement gets 4 as the mean. Because of the feature of automated feedback in writing, it makes them aware of the error writings they made and could revise it as soon as possible. The highest mean is affective engagement. It gives candidates and awardees chances to learn grammar autodidact. They can learn about English grammar and add new vocabulary when automated feedback gives them suggestions about the diction.

Even though behavioural engagement is the lowest score of engagement in using Grammarly as a tool to help writing the English motivation letters, however, the average score is more than the neutral score (3). Nevertheless, the average value is close to a value of 4, which means that it shows a positive attitude towards the ease of using Grammarly. Then, the last thing is that all the score above shows that Grammarly can help candidates and awardees write their English motivation letters to apply for a scholarship.

2. Qualitative Data

Based on the short answers all the respondents given, they agreed that all features of Grammarly is helpful for the candidates and awardees in writing English motivation letter. For the behavioural engagement, they said that the free checking feature can help them. However, if there is a wrong grammar in the writing, they cannot check that, sometimes. It is proved by a person who stated that, "If there any mistake in the motivation letter, sometimes the suggestions only let us know which part is the incorrect. However, we cannot know how to fix it." There is also a person who stated, "Actually, the free Grammarly is enough for me to revise my work. However, I cannot know the coherence and cohesion of my work." There is a person who also argued that, "Grammarly is good for checking our motivation letter because it is cheaper rather than checking to human or professional person who is good at writing."

For the cognitive engagement, they agreed that the automated feedback is good enough for revising the error parts of their work. If there is feedback from the Grammarly, they can be aware of their mistakes. One of their answers stated that, "I can learn English grammar by paying attention to the feedback from Grammarly."

They also feel really happy to check their work on Grammarly. One of person said, "I have ever applied a scholarship and wrote my motivation letter. However, I did not check it to Grammarly. I was not accepted. Then, I tried again and I checked it to Grammarly, and I was accepted. Moreover, I could learn new things from the feedback that Grammarly gives us." It is the affective engagement that they can get from Grammarly.

Conclusion

Grammarly is good for helping candidates and awardees to write the English motivation letter to apply for a scholarship. It provides so many benefits to help candidates and awardees to check, revise, and fix their work. However, there are some limitations for the free checking feature and also Grammarly cannot check the coherence and cohesion of the work.

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