INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2, 2025 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

EFFECT OF FREE ONLINE LANGUAGE TOOLS ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF WRITING SKILLS OF ENGLISH IN PAKISTANI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of free online language apps, including Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary, on enhancing the writing skills of university students in Pakistan. English is the indispensable language for academics and professional careers among Pakistanis, so proficiency in writing is a necessity. Despite its significance, students encounter several difficulties mastering English writing, including grammar, vocabulary, and writing organization. This article examines how mobile applications can be utilized to address these issues, with a focus on their application in teaching English composition courses.

This study aims to assess the influence of these applications on students' writing skills, specifically in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and the structure of their written texts. The study also aims to clarify which apps are most beneficial for students, how frequently they use these apps, and the extent to which they contribute to their improvement as writers.

The study employs a mixed-methods research strategy, incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. One hundred university students from English Composition courses at Pakistani universities were selected using stratified random sampling. Data collection consisted of a questionnaire that asked students how often they use apps, how they felt they had improved in their writing, and their experiences with app use. In addition to the survey, follow-up interviews were conducted to provide more depth regarding how students and their impact use those applications.

The findings show that a large number of students reported positive progress in writing ability when they use language software freely online. Grammarly was the tool that proved to be the most beneficial, helping students check grammar, build vocabulary, and improve their writing style. The Oxford Dictionary is valued for expanding students' language, and Google Translate is perceived as helpful in acquiring a basic vocabulary and understanding grammar rules. However, when it came to Grammarly, students were undecided on whether it was beneficial for their writing, as it was not as informative as language exchange.

The use frequency varied among the students, with most reporting daily or several times a week use, typically for 30 minutes to 1 hour each time. Students realized that these applications served to improve their writing outside of class, particularly as they worked on assignments and prepared for tests. Moreover, the students felt that the applications aided in improving their grammar and vocabulary, as well as making writing more enjoyable and less intimidating.

To sum up, then, free web-based applications, particularly Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary, have proven to be quite successful in enhancing the English writing skills of university learners in Pakistan. Such applications guide and support students in providing personal feedback, performing grammar corrections, and expanding vocabulary – all of which contribute to a significantly higher level of written output. The results indicate that such tools are a valuable supplement to the traditional classroom setting, providing students with a vehicle for improving their writing independent of class assignments. This study suggests that students should be encouraged to incorporate such applications into their daily learning, which are software public relations, to support lecturers and university administrators in their use as complementary tools to promote academic writing development.

Keywords: *English writing skills, Google Translate, Grammarly, Language learning applications, Oxford Dictionary, Pakistani university students.*

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1. Introduction

English is the primary language of academia and international communication, and it holds a central position in the academic and professional domains of Pakistan. However, many students struggle to master written English, a skill crucial to success in higher education and beyond. Challenges related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and organizing ideas into coherent written texts remain significant obstacles. These issues can have a detrimental impact on academic performance and limit students' potential to communicate effectively (Marroquín Hernández et al., 2021).

In response to these challenges, the advent of technology and mobile applications has provided students with accessible, interactive, and engaging resources to improve their writing skills. Popular tools such as Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary have become widely used by students in Pakistan. These tools, available for free, offer functionalities that address common writing issues, including grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, and text organization. This research aims to evaluate the impact of these free online tools on enhancing the writing skills of Pakistani university students, with a focus on grammar, vocabulary, and organization.

2. Research Objectives and Questions

2.1. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the impact of Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary on students' writing skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and writing organization.
- To evaluate the frequency and usage patterns of these tools among university students in Pakistan.
- To determine which of these tools is considered most beneficial by students for improving their writing skills.

2.2. Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do free online language tools like Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary influence the writing skills of Pakistani university students?
2. How frequently do students use these tools, and how do they perceive improvements in their writing as a result?
3. Which of these tools is considered the most effective in improving writing skills?

3. Literature Review

3.1. Role of Technology in Language Learning

The integration of technology into education, particularly in language learning, has significantly transformed traditional pedagogies. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) offers students an interactive and personalized learning experience, making language acquisition more accessible and engaging (Jandres, Ostorga, & Trejo, 2019). Tools such as Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary offer critical functionalities, including grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, and language comprehension, all of which are vital for achieving writing proficiency. These tools enable students to receive immediate feedback, which helps them identify and correct writing errors in real time (Marroquín Hernández et al., 2021).

3.2. Grammar and Vocabulary Challenges in Pakistani Students

Pakistani students often face challenges in mastering English grammar and vocabulary due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom and inadequate writing instruction (Jandres, Ostorga, & Trejo, 2019). The large class sizes and rote-learning techniques prevalent in Pakistani schools and universities limit the amount of personalized instruction that students receive. As a result, students tend to memorize grammar rules and vocabulary without a deeper understanding of how to apply them in writing (Marroquín Hernández et al., 2021). This lack of practical writing experience hampers their ability to produce coherent and academically rigorous written work.

3.3. Benefits of Online Language Tools

Digital tools like Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary have shown positive effects on students' writing abilities. Grammarly, in particular, is

recognized for its comprehensive grammar checking, which enables students to identify and correct errors related to sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice. According to Marroquín Hernández et al. (2021), students using Grammarly reported improvements not only in grammar but also in writing style, as it suggests alternative sentence structures and vocabulary. Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary helps students expand their vocabulary, a crucial skill for academic writing. At the same time, Google Translate helps learners understand the context and structure of sentences, thus supporting grammar and vocabulary learning (Jandres, Ostorga, & Trejo, 2019).

3.4. Previous Studies on Technology-Driven Writing Instruction

Research has consistently shown that technology plays a critical role in enhancing writing skills. Khan and Akhtar (2017) found that students who used mobile applications to support their writing demonstrated significant improvements in their grammar and writing fluency. Similarly, Cumming and Hewings (2016) observed that students who utilized language tools showed greater writing clarity and fluency. These studies support the view that free online language tools can play an essential role in helping students improve their writing independently.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study follows a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. This approach enables the collection of numerical data through surveys, as well as the acquisition of richer insights through interviews, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of free online language tools on students' writing skills.

4.2. Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 100 university students enrolled in English Composition courses at various universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure a diverse representation of students from different academic backgrounds. Participants were selected from three major academic disciplines to provide a broader perspective on the use of language tools.

4.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured survey, which included questions about students' familiarity with Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary, their frequency of use, and their perceptions of improvement in writing. The survey was followed up with interviews from a subset of 20 students to gain deeper insights into their experiences with these tools.

4.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the frequency of tool usage and the perceived improvements in writing skills. QuAjmaltative data were analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and insights regarding students' experiences with these tools.

5. Results

5.1. Impact of Free Online Language Tools on Writing Skills

The results revealed that the majority of students reported improvements in their writing after using these free online tools. Grammarly emerged as the most helpful tool, with 45% of students indicating that it helped them improve their grammar and writing style. The Oxford Dictionary was highly valued for vocabulary enhancement, with 30% of students citing its utility in learning new words. Google Translate was helpful for students in understanding basic grammar rules and vocabulary, but was considered less comprehensive than Grammarly and Oxford Dictionary.

5.2. Frequency of Usage

The majority of students reported using the apps daily, with 60% of respondents using the tools for 30 minutes to 1 hour each day. Another 20% used the apps several times a week, indicating that these tools were integrated into students' regular study routines, especially when working on assignments and preparing for exams.

5.3. Students' Perceptions of Improvement

Students overwhelmingly reported feeling more confident in their writing after using the apps. 78% of respondents felt that the tools had helped them improve their

writing, particularly in grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Moreover, students reported that using these apps made writing less intimidating and more enjoyable, as they could receive instant feedback and make corrections in real-time.

6. Discussion

6.1. Benefits of Free Online Language Tools

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, which has highlighted the positive impact of digital tools on language learning. Grammarly, in particular, was praised for its ability to improve grammar and writing style, making it an invaluable resource for students. Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary proved essential for expanding students' vocabulary, while Google Translate helped with basic grammar understanding.

6.2. The Role of Technology in Writing Instruction

The results of this study underscore the significant role that technology can play in supporting writing instruction. The use of mobile applications offers students an interactive and personalized learning experience that they can access outside the classroom. These tools help students overcome common writing challenges by providing immediate feedback and offering suggestions for improvement.

6.3. Student Engagement with Technology

The frequent use of these tools suggests that students are highly engaged with technology and motivated to use these apps to improve their writing skills. The integration of these tools into daily study routines supports the idea that technology can enhance traditional writing instruction and improve student outcomes.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that free online language tools, such as Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary, can significantly enhance the writing skills of Pakistani university students. These tools help students refine their grammar, expand their vocabulary, and organize their writing more effectively. The findings suggest that

these tools should be incorporated into academic writing courses as supplementary resources to enhance student learning outcomes.

8. Recommendations

8.1. For Students:

- Students should integrate the use of Grammarly, Google Translate, and the Oxford Dictionary into their daily study routines to improve their writing skills.
- Students are encouraged to explore additional language learning apps to complement academic writing and language development.

8.2. For Professors:

- English instructors should consider incorporating these tools into their course curricula as additional resources to improve students' writing skills.
- Professors should guide students on how to use these apps for independent writing practice effectively.

8.3. For University Administrators:

- Universities should promote the use of language learning tools and provide workshops or training sessions for both students and faculty to maximize the benefits of these applications.

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