

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

In the digital age, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning is increasingly integrated with technology. One prominent tool is Grammarly, an AI-based grammar-checking system that has gained popularity for its potential to support students' writing development. Its features, such as grammar and spelling correction, sentence structure suggestions, and clarity enhancement, specifically address the linguistic challenges faced by EFL learners. As Warschauer and Healey (1998) highlight, the incorporation of technology in language teaching allows educators to meet learners' evolving needs in innovative ways.

Among various writing genres, argumentative essays present significant challenges for EFL students. This type of writing requires critical thinking, logical reasoning, and high-level language skills, including the ability to form and present coherent arguments (Wingate, 2012; Hyland, 2019). These complexities can hinder the quality of EFL learners' writing and their overall academic performance (Yu & Liu, 2021).

Grammarly can serve as a scaffold to address these challenges. Previous studies indicate that Grammarly can enhance students' writing by providing immediate feedback and encouraging self-editing (Qassemzadeh & Soleimani, 2020; Ghufon & Rosyida, 2018). The free version, accessible to most students, includes essential features like grammar and punctuation checking, as well as suggestions for clarity. However, concerns have been raised that reliance on Grammarly may impede students'

development of independent writing and editing skills (Cavaleri & Dianati, 2016).

While some researcher has examined Grammarly's application in academic writing and thesis contexts (Tu & Han, 2018), its specific role in assisting EFL students with argumentative essays a genre that is both cognitively and linguistically demanding has been less explored. Furthermore, there is a lack of research investigating how EFL students at Jambi University, particularly those in advanced writing courses, perceive Grammarly's usefulness in their writing process. Understanding students' perceptions is vital, as a positive attitude towards such tools can enhance their effective utilization (Zhang & Wang, 2020).

Argumentative essays require EFL students to engage in critical thinking, logical reasoning, and precise language use, making them an ideal genre for evaluating Grammarly's support in managing grammar, coherence, and structure. The clear components of argumentative writing, including thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting evidence, and counterarguments, provide a structured framework for analyzing how students utilize Grammarly throughout various writing stages.

Despite the growing use of Grammarly, limited research has focused on its perceived impact on argumentative essay writing among EFL students in higher education, particularly at Jambi University. Therefore, this study aims to investigate EFL students' perceptions of using the free version of Grammarly in writing argumentative essays, specifically targeting sixth-semester students at Jambi University. This research seeks to fill the existing gap by exploring how these students view Grammarly's role in supporting their argumentative writing skills within a

specific academic.

## **1.2 Research Question**

The problems of the study are formulated as follows:

What are undergraduate EFL students' perceptions on using Grammarly's free version in addressing grammatical, structural, and stylistic issues of their argumentative essays?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

This research aims to explore sixth-semester of undergraduate EFL students' perceptions of Grammarly's free version in improving grammar, coherence, and writing quality in argumentative essays.

## **1.4 Limitation of Research**

The study focuses on sixth-semester English Education Study Program students at Jambi University. It examines their perceptions of Grammarly's free version role in improving grammar, coherence, and argumentative structure in essay writing, based on their use of the application over one semester.

## **1.5 Significance of the Research**

This research aims to provide insights into how EFL students perceive the role of Grammarly in improving their argumentative writing skills. It seeks to inform educators about the potential benefits and limitations of integrating Grammarly into writing instruction, helping them design more effective teaching strategies.

The study contributes to the academic understanding of AI-based tools in EFL writing and offers practical implications for curriculum development, particularly in

teaching argumentative essay writing. Additionally, it highlights how such tools can foster independent learning among students.

By addressing the gap in research on EFL students' perceptions of Grammarly, this study offers valuable information for educators, students, and institutions.

## **1.6 Definition of Key terms**

### **1.6.1 EFL Students**

EFL students are individuals learning English in a non-native English-speaking country. They face unique challenges such as limited vocabulary, difficulty with complex grammar, and lack of fluency in writing. This study focuses on fifth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Jambi University.

### **1.6.2 Perception**

Perception is the cognitive process by which individuals interpret and make sense of information from their environment through sensory input. In this research, perception refers to the students' attitudes, beliefs, and opinions regarding the use of Grammarly for their argumentative writing tasks. It includes how they view its effectiveness, usability, and overall impact on their writing development.

### **1.6.3 Grammarly**

Grammarly is a cloud-based writing assistant that employs AI to provide feedback on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. This tool can be used in both free and premium versions, with the premium version offering more advanced features such as style suggestions and plagiarism detection. The study focuses on students' use

of Grammarly to improve their argumentative essays and how they perceive its usefulness in enhancing their writing skills.

#### **1.6.4 Argumentative Essays**

An argumentative essay is a type of academic writing in which the writer presents a clear claim or position on a topic and supports it with logical reasoning, evidence, and counterarguments. This type of essay is complex as it requires the writer to demonstrate critical thinking, organize ideas coherently, and use persuasive language effectively. For example, an argumentative essay might argue for or against a policy, such as the use of renewable energy, presenting evidence to support the position and addressing opposing views.