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Experiences of PINE graduates in using Grammarly for undergraduate thesis revision

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Autor:

Jimmy Josue Juela Ali

Autor:

Ana Carolina Tenesaca Gordillo

Tutor:

Diego Patricio Ortega Auquilla, MS.c, Ph.D(c)

Azogues - Ecuador

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Resumen

Redactar una tesis de investigación en un segundo idioma puede suponer un reto para los estudiantes universitarios, ya que requiere prestar atención a la gramática y a la claridad, lo que aumenta su compromiso. Por ello, recurrieron al uso de herramientas como Grammarly, que proporciona comentarios en tiempo real sobre gramática, puntuación y estilo de escritura. Esto les ayudó a aumentar su confianza en la escritura. Este estudio explora las experiencias de los graduados de PINE con el uso de Grammarly en el proceso de redacción de tesis. Se empleó un enfoque de investigación cualitativa narrativa para permitir una comprensión rica y detallada de las experiencias de los participantes, con la cooperación de cinco graduados de la UNAE. Para la recogida de datos se utilizaron entrevistas individuales y un grupo de discusión. A través de las entrevistas, los participantes expresaron sus experiencias y percepciones de la aplicación durante el proceso de escritura de la tesis, y a través del grupo focal, se discutieron temas que no se trataron o no se discutieron en profundidad en el procedimiento anterior. Los resultados mostraron que Grammarly se destacó como una herramienta valiosa para los graduados de PINE, promoviendo una tesis con menos errores y mayor claridad. A pesar de sus limitaciones, como las correcciones fuera de contexto y el coste de la versión premium, su uso facilitó la mejora de la calidad y organización de los textos escritos. Además, esta investigación indica lo esencial que es complementar esta herramienta con habilidades de escritura crítica.

Palabras claves: Graduados, escritura tesis, experiencia, Grammarly

Abstract

Writing a research thesis in a second language can be challenging for university students, as it requires attention to grammar and clarity, which increases their commitment. Thus, they resorted to using tools such as Grammarly, which provides real-time grammar, punctuation, and writing style feedback. It helped them to increase their confidence in writing. This study explored PINE graduates' experiences using Grammarly in the thesis writing process. A qualitative narrative research approach was employed to allow for a rich and detailed understanding of the participants' experiences, with the cooperation of five UNAE graduates. Individual interviews and a focus group were used for data collection. Through the interviews, the participants expressed their experiences and perceptions of the application during the thesis writing process, and through the focus group, topics that were not covered or not discussed in depth in the previous procedure were discussed. The results showed that Grammarly stood out as a valuable tool for PINE graduates, promoting a thesis with fewer errors and greater clarity. Despite its limitations, such as out-of-context corrections and the cost of the premium version, its use facilitated the improvement of the quality and organization of the written texts. In addition, this research indicates how essential it is to complement this tool with critical writing skills.

Keywords: Graduates, thesis writing, experience, Grammarly

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I. Introduction

Research context

"La Universidad Nacional de Educación" (UNAE) offers the undergraduate program "Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros" (PINE), which aims to enable students to master the English language, to design and to apply methodologies in educational institutions in Ecuador. For adequate English language proficiency, students must develop the four skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening). However, during this preparation, students may encounter some barriers, such as difficulty mastering their writing skills.

Castillo-Cuesta et al. (2021) stated that mastering writing is challenging since it requires considerable effort to learn it effectively. This skill is one of the most complex to develop and improve since written texts are evaluated for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and verbal errors, among other things. Anggraini et al. (2024) highlighted that the writer must elaborate their work in a coherent, accessible, expressive, and comprehensible manner to ensure it is both straightforward to read and capable of eliciting strong emotional responses from the reader. It influences university students since when doing their final degree project, such as a thesis, they have to demonstrate their writing English skills obtained during their professional development. Therefore, students feel a commitment that their written texts meet these characteristics and are relevant to the target audience. For this reason, they tend to use applications that allow them to have immediate feedback to improve their writing. One of the applications is Grammarly which is used by some thesis writers to review their papers.

Given that with this research, the points of analysis were the experiences that the graduates had with the use of Grammarly during their thesis writing process. A qualitative methodology based on the narrative inquiry design was chosen to allow researchers to explore and know the role of Grammarly in this project. It serves as a basis for improving the understanding of the students who intend to complete their thesis with the help of this application.

Diagnosis of the situation

Academic writing goes beyond simply conveying information to involve the ability to critically analyze ideas, interpret data, and present arguments effectively and persuasively. Enabling the sharing of knowledge, exploring ideas, and contributing to advancing knowledge in education and research. Additionally, it is essential that the information written is clear and complies with superficial aspects of the language in order not to create confusion. In the words of AlMarwani (2022), the study skills model presupposes proficiency in academic writing primarily concerning the superficial aspects of language, such as grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling. It means that an academic text not only focuses on the research results but also on writing the results to highlight their validity.

Nevertheless, Paltridge and Starfield (2019) mentioned that writing a research thesis in a language that is not one's mother tongue is undoubtedly challenging. It is because this implies an additional process of mental translation and concept adaptation, as well as requiring attention to avoid grammatical mistakes, as Lestari (2020) stated, university students often feel overwhelmed by the pressure to excel in grammar and develop a coherent thesis, leading to increased distrust.

University students face the uncertainty of creating a solid academic paper, promoting a lack of confidence in dealing with language barriers that can make it difficult to express ideas. This insecurity is compounded by previous negative experiences in writing, which can generate additional doubts about the ability to communicate effectively. Nonetheless, EFL learners are not the only pressures they have to deal with because they must also focus on thoroughly reviewing the grammar in each part of the paper.

Therefore, they get extra help with grammar review to make the revision work more efficient. One of the tools that allows EFL learners to get additional feedback is Grammarly, which detects grammatical errors and provides instant suggestions. This application is known for its ease of use, accuracy, and availability, as it can be used for free or in a premium version according to the user's interests.

Importance of the study

This study explored the personal experiences of PINE graduates at UNAE University who used Grammarly while writing their theses. Describing the specific features, reflecting on advantages and disadvantages, and analyzing the influences of Grammarly that students have found in using Grammarly (free and premium), we sought to understand the role of Grammarly in thesis revision. The results of this research provided valuable information to improve the processes of thesis revision in students who perform their degree project in a second language (English).

This research was feasible because the study participants were UNAE graduates who represented a suitable and accessible group of participants to explore using Grammarly during

thesis writing. In addition, the two techniques used for data collection, interviews, and a focus group, made it feasible to obtain relevant data for the analysis. On the other hand, the qualitative narrative inquiry approach enabled researchers to explore the lived experiences of the graduates with Grammarly. It contributed to understanding the strengths of this technological tool and, at the same time, addressing any challenges or limitations that may arise. This data could guide students in optimizing the use of Grammarly in their thesis writing process and improve the quality of their work.

Additionally, this research was further enriched with the narrative inquiry method. Clandinin and Cain (2013) claimed that "narrative inquiries are always filled with rich temporally unfolding narrative accounts, as they represent the lived and told experiences of participants and researchers" (p. 545). Allowing to explore how they have adopted Grammarly in the thesis writing process, the participants' personal experiences provided a precise and transparent realistic perspective of this tool. Thus, we identified how Grammarly has been integrated into academic writing and how it has worked, giving a deep and accurate understanding.

Main Research Question

How did PINE graduates narrate their experiences using Grammarly in the process of writing their undergraduate thesis manuscripts?

Specific Questions

- What features of Grammarly did the PINE graduates find useful during their thesis writing?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of the PINE graduates' experiment in integrating Grammarly into their thesis?
- How did Grammarly's suggestions influence the overall quality of thesis writing?

General Objective

To explore the experiences of PINE graduates with the use of Grammarly in the process of writing their undergraduate thesis manuscripts.

Specific objectives

- To describe the features the graduates found useful of Grammarly during their thesis writing.
- To reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of the graduates' experiment in integrating Grammarly into their thesis.
- To analyze the influence of the Grammarly suggestion on the overall quality of thesis writing.

II. Literature review

Previous studies

The elaboration of this research was guided and influenced by the following literature review section, which examines recent studies. These studies analyzed whether Grammarly helps to improve writing and the advantages or disadvantages of these tools for academic writing. In addition, users' perceptions and experiences of strengths and possible limitations provide a solid basis for probing and contextualizing the research findings.

The first study was developed in La Libertad – Ecuador and is entitled "Advantages and Disadvantages of Artificial Intelligence in the Learning Process in Adolescents" by González (2024). This study aimed to examine the advantages and disadvantages of including Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the learning process in adolescents. The methodology used for this study was qualitative, focusing on the qualitative approach to investigate experiences and perceptions. The instruments used for data collection were interviews with sixteen participants between the ages of fifteen and eighteen selected by convenience sampling. The results of this study revealed that AI applications were used for various academic activities such as analysis and research. They have been described as accurate and concise, improving the quality of learning. However, some participants mentioned that using these applications fosters dependency, and others claimed it was only an extra support.

This previous research supplied relevant information for our study because it provided insight into the advantages and disadvantages of using AI. Although it was not directly related to the use of Grammarly, it gave us a broader picture of the role of these tools. In addition, it probed adolescents' perceptions of AI which provided an outline for probing how PINE

graduates perceived the influence of Grammarly's suggestions during the process of revising their theses.

This second study was developed in Santa Elena, Ecuador, and is entitled "Grammarly as a correction tool to improve the writing skills of 10th-grade students" by Angel and Borbor (2023). The aim was to analyze whether Grammarly can serve to develop students' writing skills. The methodology used was qualitative research with the participation of 10th-grade students. The instruments used were a focus group and a questionnaire, which yielded results that Grammarly helped improve the coherence of compositions; however, students need to learn from the basics to elaborate their compositions. In conclusion, they use this application to do homework and prepare for exams, but students must pay attention to the comments. Therefore, they suggested that the teacher use Grammarly in their class.

This previous study was valuable to this research because it revealed insight into how EFL students faced difficulties in the writing process. It led to an understanding of why students were motivated to use Grammarly to help them address these problems and aid in the quality of their writing, thus facilitating a more effective and accurate writing process.

The third study was conducted in Magelang, Indonesia, and is entitled "Exploring English Department Students' Perceptions of Using Grammarly to Check the Grammar in Their Writing" by Fitriana and Nurazni (2022). This study aimed to find out English department students' perspectives on using Grammarly software as a tool for checking the grammar in their writing. The methodology used in this research was a case study with a descriptive qualitative approach. To collect data, the researcher applied questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 150 sixth-semester students of the English Department at Universitas Tidar. The results of this study revealed that Grammarly is advantageous to students as it significantly helps them

improve their writing by providing corrective assistance. In addition, Grammarly does not occupy significant space and is full-featured. However, Grammarly still makes a few incorrect corrections, and the free version is limited. In conclusion, despite its limitations, Grammarly offers more support to students in terms of grammar correction assistance.

This study was valuable to this research because it provided information into how students experienced using Grammarly to correct their grammar by providing information on its benefits and limitations. These findings supplied insight into what PINE graduates may have experienced when using Grammarly in writing their theses, which was the most advanced process in terms of organization and grammar. Therefore, Fitriana and Nurazni' s study supported exploring whether the graduates found Grammarly helpful and learning how they dealt with difficulties, such as incorrect suggestions or additional limitations in writing.

The fourth study was conducted in Bandung, Indonesia, "Utilizing Grammarly in Evaluating Academic Writing: Narrative Research on EFL Students' Experience" by Nova (2018). This study aimed to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of Grammarly as a tool for assessing EFL learners' academic writing. The methodology used was qualitative narrative research with three Indonesian EFL graduate students. The instruments for gathering data were interviews and Grammarly documentation of the student's accounts. The results of this study showed that Grammarly was a valuable tool for correcting academic writing. It offered advantages like ease of access, assessment speed, and comment clarity. However, its weaknesses include misleading feedback and limited contextual assessment.

This previous study contributed remarkably to our research by providing a methodological basis for exploring using Grammarly through the narrative of students' experiences. This article focused on the strengths and weaknesses of this tool, validating the

application of the narrative inquiry method in our study to probe PINE graduates' experiences with Grammarly. This methodology allowed us to gain a detailed insight into the role of the tool in thesis writing.

Theoretical framework

Cognitive approach

The cognitive approach focuses on the construction of knowledge through mental processes.

Uluşan (2018) mentioned that:

> Cognitive psychologists see the human mind as a kind of symbolic processor which is constantly occupied with mental processes. And these mental processes operate on mental representations and intervene between input (whatever data get into this symbolic processor, the mind) and output (whatever the results of what the mind produces) (p. 228).

During the learning process, the mind plays an active role where the learner assimilates, interprets, and organizes the information to produce later. The mind not only retains information but also has the function of process and combining symbols, such as words or concepts, promoting critical thinking and learning through interaction.

Tsvetkova (2016) mentioned that the cognitive approach during the acquisition and construction of English facilitates the understanding between previous and new knowledge. As a result of this, language learning occurs; however, this process of learning to write involves a complex mental process. Uluşan (2018) claimed that "Cognitive research has revealed that practice is essential for automatization of the writing skill, and in turn, developing a good

command of writing both in native language and foreign language" (p. 233). In other words, through continuous practice, writing skills are improved because the mind connects learning with previous knowledge, allowing the learner to build and refine competencies.

Nonetheless, being critical of learning is essential for a learner to recognize strengths and weaknesses, which encourages reflection on one's own understanding and flexible thinking; as Skehan (1998) stated, metacognitive learning strategies support broader learning processes by fostering self-awareness and adaptability. During the practice process, they allowed the individuals to closely monitor their progress and adjust strategies to meet their needs with practical knowledge.

Meanwhile, the integration of technology for the revision of a written text can have a significant role in enhancing metacognitive development. Since technological tools allow students to reflect and identify their frequent mistakes to adjust their strategies for improvement, as Alotaibi (2023) indicated, it is an immediate feedback mechanism that creates a dynamic writing environment for students to learn from their mistakes and make improvements in real time. Tools such as Grammarly not only optimize linguistic accuracy in academic writing such as a thesis but also reinforce the ability to reflect and apply adjustments to the writing process as a thesis. Thus, the cognitive and metacognitive process in the development of writing skills fosters learning and critical thinking.

Writing skill in English

"Writing is an English language skill that the students must learn because writing activity can improve their thinking skills and help them to develop other language skills" (Purnamasari et

al., 2021, p. 101). This skill consists of second language learners knowing how to express knowledge, ideas, or information to a specific audience through writing. This process goes from the simple to the complex, from writing a word to writing a text, which requires the writer to master several communicative skills. In addition, to the mastery of formal and informal writing, each idea expressed on paper has a different objective. Both redactions need to be clear and precise because, as opposed to other skills, this one does not allow the addressee to ask for clarification of an idea immediately.

For a text to make sense, it is essential to organize ideas to obtain explicit and straightforward content, along with spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure, to make a text coherent and enriching. According to Nozima and Nusratovich (2023), “Effective communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing requires a strong grasp of grammar rules” (p. 551). Understandable content depends on the correct use of grammar; for this reason, mastery of these components is necessary for the writing process.

However, this process requires other factors to be produced effectively. One of them is creativity, which allows the creation of captivating, unique, and original texts. Angel and Borbor (2023) mentioned that “writing is creating symbols called letters that make a sentence that conveys a general idea, which can be thoughts, feelings, or emotions” (p.20). Each letter and word have a meaning in context to give meaning to the story. Writing, considered an art, is used to communicate ideas in formal or informal contexts. Creativity highlights the language and provides meaning and relevance to a text.

Another essential factor is critical thinking, which is key in generating ideas to develop a written product and analyzing and evaluating its quality. As Gautam (2019) noted, writing shows critical thinking and creativity, enabling writers to judge and adjust their work effectively.

Through it, writers classify and evaluate information, which results in coherent writing. In addition, this critical analysis allows for distinguishing reliable sources and validating data to strengthen arguments. In short, critical thinking enables the creation of high-quality academic texts with unique and relevant information.

Therefore, effective writing combines several elements, such as creativity, critical thinking, and a mastery of the language. Creativity allows for creating unique and engaging content, while critical thinking ensures the quality and relevance of ideas. A knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary is essential for clear and coherent communication. Writers, by mastering these components, can produce compelling and informative texts that effectively convey their messages to the intended audience.

Academic writing

Ahmad et al. (2022) claimed that:

> Among the four skills of language, writing is a significant and productive skill, and the academic writing is one of the important features of English as a Second Language. However, the writing skill is on the second place as an instrument for communication, but it is much significant particularly in the academic zone, and is widely used in education and publications (p. 523).

Although it does not occupy the first place, it has the same relevance within the academic field since this written text communicates information that requires the writer's ability to analyze, create, organize, and write the ideas appropriately.

Academic writing is formal in educational and research contexts, distinguished by rigor, precision, and objectivity. As Lestari (2020) highlighted, the purpose of academic writing is to make a piece of writing clear and understandable to the reader or proofreader. Academic writing helps to promote effective communication in academic circles. Thus, through precise and formal language, authors construct clear and coherent arguments supported by empirical evidence, facilitating understanding and educational collaboration.

It is worth mentioning that this is not only a final product, but also a learning process, as noted by Akkaya and Aydin (2018), it is one of the stages in the academic research process where researchers report ideas, experiences, observations, applications/tests, and other scenarios. Through the production of academic texts, students develop essential skills such as research, critical analysis, information synthesis, and effective communication. Therefore, academic writing plays a crucial role in fostering critical thinking skills, honing communication abilities, and advancing knowledge within a particular field of study.

Students often encounter different challenges while writing these texts. Lestari (2020) noted that when writing an academic text writers should pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation, at the same time as to the structure of paragraphs, sentences, and the presentation of the work. It means students must be aware of the accuracy, coherence, and organization of their writing to ensure its clarity, relevance, and value in the field studied. Furthermore, Shodieva (2023) mentioned that academic writing, despite its intricacies, demands comprehension, ethical application, and strict avoidance of plagiarism. Thus, reviewing the originality of the work also entails a careful revision of the writing.

Akkaya and Aydin (2018) emphasized that mastering academic writing requires research, comprehension of complex texts, understanding of disciplinary concepts, and strategies for analyzing new information. It indicates that mastering academic writing is not merely a matter of grammatical correctness or stylistic elegance. It requires integrated skills that enable writers to address potential research issues, comprehend complex texts, apply acquired knowledge, and accurately capture and interpret information reflectively.

Thesis writing

"The thesis is academic writing and it so differs from another kind of writing" (Lestari, 2020, p. 18). It is an academic and research paper in which students conduct research focused on their areas of professional development in an original and detailed manner. This document generally contains three essential parts: an introduction, a review of related research, and methodology. The introduction sets the context and objectives of the research, the literature review examines previous studies and relevant theories, and the methodology describes the procedures used to conduct the research.

Graduates are expected to demonstrate and hone their research skills as stated by Paltridge and Starfield (2019) "Students are often required in this kind of writing not only to answer their research question/s but also to 'show what they know' in doing this" (p.15). Thus, extensive knowledge is required to provide relevant work. Students not only demonstrate proficiency in the field but also develop critical skills for life-long learning. Hence, the thesis reinforces knowledge and fosters skills for the future.

A thesis allows the author to contribute new information, analysis, or perspectives that enhance and enrich the academic or professional field within an academic area such as second language learning allows students to demonstrate and test skills. Furthermore, Lestari (2020) argued writing a thesis requires more knowledge to support the argument in writing, which means that it can be complicated if students do not train for it. Nonetheless, it is vital to prioritize thesis writing because it demonstrates a student's intellectual growth within the subject area.

However, second language learners may face challenges in thesis writing since as Lestari (2020) mentioned, "In writing a thesis, students feel worried or do not have confidence in their ability. They are afraid of making an error in English" (p.18). This sensation that university students feel is because there is a commitment to demonstrate their academic and linguistic skills in the writing of the text. In addition, it is a very long and arduous task in which they must meet the parameters of a thesis in a second language by expressing clarity and precision

Grammarly application

Nowadays, there are several applications to check the grammar and vocabulary of texts written in English. Billa highlighted that the (2024) Automatic Writing Evaluation (AWE), known as a grammar checker, has the function of detecting grammatical errors, such as spelling, punctuation marks, verbs, or articles. It is worth mentioning that these applications not only detect simple grammatical errors such as punctuation but also correct the use of verbs, articles, pronouns, and so on. It allows the final result of a piece of writing to improve its quality, which is helpful for those who wish to improve their English writing or receive immediate feedback on their written texts.

One of AWE's applications is Grammarly, which was founded in 2009 to detect grammatical errors. Samosir and Daulay (2023) mentioned that Grammarly is known as the world's best English grammar application, used by many university and high school students to check for spelling errors. In addition, Fahmi and Cahyono (2021) noticed that Grammarly is a simple tool that can be beneficial for students and academics in addressing their writing needs by detecting and correcting punctuation, spelling, and grammatical errors. Thus, the extensive and immediate feedback has made this application popular among students and teachers as it proves to be an affordable, effective, and easy-to-use software when revising written texts.

Grammarly can be used on multiple platforms to offer the user several access options to streamline the revision process, "this allows you to get your most meaningful work done faster without distractions from context-switching between apps as you write in documents, respond to messages, and plan tasks and projects" (Grammarly, 2024). The features that users can access depend on which version they choose, either the free or the premium version. Below are the functions of these two versions:

Table 1

Grammarly versions and functions

Free version	**Premium Version**
• Grammar • Spelling • Punctuation • Conciseness • Tone detection • Generate text using 100 AI prompts	• Everything in free • Full-sentence rewrites • Word choice • Tone suggestions • Detect plagiarism • Generate text with 1,000 AI suggestions

Note. Information from Grammarly (2024).

The free version of Grammarly

The free version of Grammarly is accessible to all users who opt in, the only requirement is to create an account. Fitria (2021) pointed out that the free feature allows students and users to check punctuation, spelling, and grammar. Although the premium version offers a variety of features, the free feature offers many corrections to improve written texts. Hermansyah et al. (2024) mentioned that the free and quick evaluation offered by Grammarly allows users to evaluate their writing without spending time and money. This version is highly recommended for assessing students' writing because it provides immediate feedback.

However, it is essential to remember that since this application has two versions, the free version always has limitations and few benefits compared to the premium version. Astuti et al. (2023) stated that the free version has some weaknesses such as limited feedback and mentions that it is not always correct. These limitations can cause grammatical errors; therefore, every suggestion in the application should be checked.

Premium version of Grammarly

Unlike the free version, this version provides more in-depth feedback. Dewi (2022) emphasized that "Grammarly for the premium version has more completed features, such as plagiarism detection, vocabulary suggestions, and contextual spelling" (p.156). In addition, this not only provides extensive feedback but also provides specific error corrections and recommendations. Wardatin et al. (2022) determined that this version has five advantages

including satisfying needs, self-management, practice, self-control, and motivation; therefore, Grammarly improves the writing and causes self-confidence in the writer knowing that their writing has been thoroughly reviewed.

Nevertheless, it is known that grammar-checking applications should not be relied upon entirely because they tend to fail occasionally, and there may be discrepancies in the correct structured sentences. In addition, these tools can generate nonsensical or disorganized ideas. Therefore, the student should focus on developing their writing skills, as grammar alone does not guarantee the success of a paper. It should be noted that since it is a paid application, not all students have access to it, because of the cost or the payment method.

Although Grammarly's functions are divided according to the version used, the application benefits second-language thesis writers by allowing them to make immediate revisions. In addition, since they are learning a foreign language, they often do not notice some errors that Grammarly detects. This allows them to save time during this revision process and, at the same time, improve their language skills with the feedback obtained.

Experiences in Grammarly in writing thesis

Experiences are knowledge created through each person's interaction with the real world, which generates favorable or detrimental consequences throughout life. According to Kim and Chen (2020), experiences are considered intangible, unique, ongoing, and individual events. Thus, these experiences not only become significant moments in life but also influence decision-making, actions, habits, and others. In addition, the experiences accumulated throughout life become the basis on which each identity and perspective of the world is built.

On the other hand, experiences allow people to make more conscious and informed decisions since they provide information based on previous situations that help to evaluate different situations. It is because each lived moment leaves a positive or negative teaching, allowing the modeling of thought patterns and future expectations. According to Daher et al. (2017), human experience is not limited to living events but involves an active interpretation and construction of meaning through reflective thinking. In other words, experiences are anecdotes and mechanisms that facilitate assessment and judgment on how to act in future circumstances. Therefore, in the educational environment, experiences play a significant role in developing language skills, especially in writing. During practice, they develop skills that further their knowledge, shaping how students express themselves and communicate.

In the same way, AI technology tools such as Grammarly have begun to occupy a meaningful place in the experiences to strengthen learning. This tool can be valuable because it is available to everyone, offering immediate feedback and enriching the learning experience. Alotaibi (2023), "AI-powered language tools offer personalized learning experiences, enabling learners to receive instant feedback on their writing and speech" (p. 3720). Given the foundations of these tools, users not only correct errors but also reflect and learn; this benefits the creation of positive or negative experiences with these tools by allowing users to judge their functionality.

III. Methodology

Research approach

For this study, the qualitative approach was used, which allowed researchers to delve into the details of human experiences and obtain information about the factors that give rise to them. As Hernández et al. (2014) acknowledged qualitative research provides an authentic view of the phenomena, depth of data, interpretative richness, details, and unique experiences. Thus, this study provided insight into university students' experiences using Grammarly for undergraduate thesis revision.

Furthermore, this approach is flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt new procedures to the study according to emerging needs. In addition, this is less rigid, which creates a significant advantage in that information is obtained without the pressure of receiving feedback, thus allowing insight into the phenomena of this study. This study provided unforced information in which the students naturally relate their experiences without following a strict process.

Research design

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry because according to Creswell and Poth (2017), "the narrative study tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and historical context, and including the important themes in those lived experiences" (p. 73). The main characteristic of it is to study the participants' lived experiences in a chronological and contextualized manner, thus allowing researchers to obtain rich narratives.

Riessman (2008) identified that narrative methodology focuses on understanding how people make sense of their experiences and how these influence their behavior and decision-making not just on understanding the facts. Thus, narratives provided a clear understanding of how Grammarly influenced the undergraduate thesis review process. Focusing on the participants' experiences to capture and uncover profound facts they attributed to the study.

Research procedures

To develop this research, the steps of a narrative inquiry suggested by Creswell and Poth (2017) were adjusted. These stages were applied to address the objectives of this study. Each stage followed by this research is detailed below.

Determine the phenomenon

The first procedure was to review whether the phenomenon of describing Grammarly's role in reviewing thesis manuscripts can be answered with the narrative method. Then, a statement of the specific questions and objectives was presented by the researchers.

Select participants

This step involved creating a list of characteristics the graduates had to have to participate in the research. Five participants were selected because they met the four established criteria, which align with the guidelines of narrative methodology. For data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each participant, followed by a focus group with the five participants; these processes were audio-recorded.

Collection of data

In this section, five individual interviews were conducted with an eleven-question questionnaire, followed by a ten-question focus group with the same participants. The recordings of the individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed. They were made with a technology tool called Deepgram that performs this function; however, two manual revisions of each transcription were made to ensure that the information collected was correct and complete.

Retailing individual stories

Analyze the meaning of the experiences on how students describe the role of this technological tool, identifying essential information, themes, and details that allowed researchers to deeply understand the experiences of Grammarly students in their thesis writing process.

Analyze stories

The themes of the narratives were identified to establish the chronology of events and discover recurring patterns. In addition, a preliminary draft of each narrative was developed, organizing the data collected to reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Final version

With the data already coded and interpreted in this final stage, the final report of the research was elaborated according to the guidelines of this study.

Participants

There were five UNAE participants chosen through a purposive sampling technique to participate in this research. Rai and Thapa 2015 stated that the main purpose of purposive sampling is to focus on specific characteristics of the population of interest to obtain better answers to the research questions. The four criteria that participants had to meet to be part of this research were as follows:

- The first criterion was to have been part of the PINE program of the UNAE University. As evidence, participants must have a valid student Identity Card.
- The second criterion was that the participants had completed their last university semester in the first academic period of 2024. As evidence, they must have passed all subjects.
- The third criterion was to have completed a thesis-based project as a requirement for graduation. As evidence, the complete document of each participant was requested.
- The fourth criterion was that the participants had used the Grammarly application (free or premium version) in the thesis revision. As evidence, they must only have an account created in the application.

This list of criteria was used to ensure that the participants were aligned with the research guidelines. In order to find the participants, a list of students who had completed the thesis was acquired, and to communicate with them, WhatsApp was used to inform them of the research objective and ask them if they were willing to participate and verify if they met the four research criteria. After this, they were made to sign the informed consent form (see Appendix 3) to have proof of their acceptance.

Instruments and data collection

To collect the data for this research, the researchers used two qualitative techniques:

The first technique used for data collection was the interview, which according to Islam (2022), provided a "deeper" understanding or insight into social issues or phenomena. In other words, it captured unique information to understand a phenomenon through the interviewee's point of view, beliefs, or feelings. Given the interaction required in this process, it allowed the interviewer to create an atmosphere of trust with the interviewee, which is beneficial for obtaining honest answers. During the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, a conversation focused on the purpose of the research is established, which is not an interrogation but a space to share and express opinions honestly.

There are several types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. However, this research used the semi-structured interview because it allows for adaptation to the conversation with open-ended questions to obtain detailed information. The researchers must listen carefully to details, which can gather more data. In addition, Steele (2018) stressed that the interviewer facilitates the space for the interviewee's expression and is willing to learn through active listening, intervening only when necessary. Through this process, it facilitated the creation of new questions as the interview proceeded and provided a clearer understanding of the key points discussed. As Montañés (2010) suggested semi-structured interviews are not about determining the position of the person interviewed concerning the phenomenon or problem, but to collect and expand the information. This interview consisted of eleven open-ended questions in thirty-eight to fifty minutes and was conducted only once to each of the five participants.

Furthermore, Steele (2018) recommended that "individual key informant interviews can

be a good starting point for planning a future set of focus groups" (p. 151). Therefore, the second technique to collect data was a focus group discussion (FGD). It was possible to go deeper into issues that were unclear during the interview process. This technique allowed to explore the experiences and knowledge of individuals coupled with analyzing how and why they think the way they do. In addition, during this process, several points of view emerged and were discussed by the participants, resulting in the gathering of outstanding data on the phenomenon under study. It is worth noting that the approximate time of this process was around sixty minutes. The number of questions in that process was ten questions, and the participation of five participants.

The interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted in the participants' native language, Spanish, which allowed them to express their answers easily. Participation was anonymous, thus they in this study were identified with a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Data analysis

Inductive analysis was performed on the data with the help of MAXQDA, a software that allows quantitative and qualitative information to be managed and analyzed. It is designed to help researchers organize, analyze, and interpret data. MAXQDA makes it straightforward to identify themes, patterns, key insights, and detective information that may go unnoticed in a manual analysis. It also offers visual data that enriches an analysis as concept maps, diagrams, code clouds, and others. This software was a crucial tool in this qualitative research as it contributed to generating solid interpretations from the participants' experiences of this study.

The data obtained from this qualitative research were analyzed through an inductive analysis (IA)because it categorizes the relevant information. Thomas (2003) stated that "the

outcome from an inductive analysis is the development of categories into a model or framework that summarizes the raw data and conveys key themes and processes" (p. 4). Furthermore, Kyngäs (2020) mentioned, "inductive thematic analysis is widely used among qualitative researchers and can provide meaningful insight to diverse research topics" (p. 30). During this process, patterns were identified that provided an in-depth understanding of Grammarly's role in the thesis writing revision process.

To go into depth with the findings gathered in the previous step, a thematic analysis (TA) was performed. Dawadi (2020) cited that "thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that researchers use to systematically organize and analyze complex data sets" (p. 62). It facilitated organizing and capturing the narratives reflecting Grammarly's influence. It also grouped the coded data according to their relationship, creating themes that enabled a structured interpretation. The researchers then elaborated on the interpretation of the graduate students' narratives.

IV Results and discussion

Through this qualitative narrative inquiry research, data were collected to explore the experience of using Grammarly in the graduate thesis revision process of a group of PINE graduates. It revealed the features they found valuable, the advantages and disadvantages of using Grammarly, and the influence of the suggestion on the overall quality of thesis writing. The present results were obtained from five individual interviews and one focus group. Inductive coding was used to identify the data collected, and thematic analysis was used to organize and analyze this information. The results were organized by themes, sub-themes, and codes.

Retelling participants' stories about using Grammarly

Violeta (Participant 1)

Violeta was 22 years old and lived with her mother and brother. She is from the city of Cuenca and went to university by bus. As a degree project, she decided to do the thesis. Violeta used Grammarly to review her work, which was influenced by recommendations from her thesis tutor and the Unidad de Integración Curricular teacher (a teacher who provides extra support to PINE students in their thesis-based projects). During the thesis, she said that the tutor was reviewing the thesis and recommended that she use Grammarly to have instant feedback. Therefore, she checked the thesis with the free version to get a grammar, spelling, and punctuation check. That version gave her possible suggestions but did not tell her how to change it, thus she tried to fix it herself. However, Violeta mentioned that her curriculum unit teacher had the premium version and that she uploaded the document to her account. After uploading it, the teacher downloaded the report made by the application and sent it to her. Upon receiving it, she corrected the thesis, which allowed her to understand and improve her written ideas which led her to the opinion that:

> *How nice to receive feedback and that it is not so bad, but in the end also to know why we have in certain parts wrong / Qué bonito recibir un feedback y que no sea tan mal, pero a la final también saber el por qué tenemos en ciertas partes mal (Individual interview 1).*

Therefore, Violeta mentioned that this application helped to improve the overall quality of the thesis because, with the feedback she received, she could improve every part of her writing. In addition, she argued that she preferred to have the application downloaded on the

computer because she was getting immediate feedback. She emphasized the importance of combining the tool with her reflective knowledge and not relying entirely on the application' s suggestions, as quoted in the following fragment:

> *Obviously, feedback is good, I am not saying it' s not, but you always have to go as I say so slowly writing / Hay que ir teniendo como que un poquito de cuidado en la mayoría, obviamente el feedback es bueno, no digo que no, pero siempre hay que ir como digo así despacio escribiendo (Individual interview 1).*

Coral (Participant 2)

Coral was 23 years old and lived with her parents. She is from the city of Cuenca from where she was going by bus to the university UNAE. In the seventh semester, she decided to do a thesis as a degree project. Moreover, Coral reported that she decided to use Grammarly for her project because she was unsure if she used grammar correctly. She said she used the free version because it was not within her means to use the premium version. She was a student and had to pay for her expenses, therefore, Coral took advantage of all the features of the free version, the following key excerpt reaffirmed it:

> *Obviously, it did not give me like the answers could tell me how I should go, but it did give me like a yellow line so I knew it was wrong / Obviamente no me daba como que las respuestas se podrían decir de cómo debería ir, pero sí me señalaba como con una línea amarillita entonces yo ya sabía que estaba mal (Individual interview 2).*

During use, she received feedback on her mistakes, which allowed her to correct and learn and improve her language skills. It made her feel that she saved time in the revision

process. Besides, stated that in the thesis process, Grammarly helped her refresh her ideas because sometimes she did not know what ideas to redact anymore, as it cited:

> *There were times when I felt frustrated because at the moment of writing, I sometimes wrote badly or I could not come up with the ideas and Grammarly only corrected me. Therefore, at least with the help, I felt a little more liberated / Había momentos en los que me sentía frustrada porque al momento de escribir a veces escribía mal o no se me venían las ideas y el Grammarly solo me corregía. Entonces yo por lo menos ya ahí con una ayuda me sentía un poco más liberada (Individual interview 2).*

However, Coral indicated that sometimes she relied on the application and was waiting for help from the application. She commented that there were times when she made modifications and the application kept pointing out an error, but with her knowledge, she knew that it was well written, and she did not modify it. In general, Coral emphasized that using Grammarly had positive aspects because it helped her to have great structured writing with few grammatical errors, as she stated:

> *I think that without those suggestions, it would not have been an academic text. That is, it would not have been very well written / Creo que sin esas sugerencias no hubiera sido un texto académico. O sea, no hubiera estado muy bien escrito (Individual interview 2).*

Therefore, she assured that it is favorable to take advantage of the functions of this application because it nurtures the writing of the thesis.

Tulipan (Participant 3)

Tulipan was 23 years old and lived with his father in the city of Cuenca. When she was in the seventh semester, she decided to do a thesis as a degree project. Therefore, Tulipan decided to use the Grammarly application to save time in her thesis revision because being in the ninth semester and aside from her personal life was quite exhausting, which used to cause frustration and stress. Nonetheless, using Grammarly helped her to feel relieved because it allowed her to correct mistakes in her research. She mentioned that at the beginning of the thesis, she started using the free version, but because the participant could not use all the benefits, she switched to the premium version. It benefited her in editing out all the repetitive ideas and correcting spelling, tone, and grammatical errors, which improved her writing. Nevertheless, there was also her work as she mentioned:

> *Grammarly if it was, if it helped us in, in the aspect of checking errors, but it was also a process of us, that we had to do it manually / Grammarly si fue si nos ayudó en, en el aspecto de revisar errores, pero también fue un proceso de nosotras, que tuvimos que hacerlo manualmente (Individual interview 3).*

On the other hand, Tulipan concluded that it is advisable to acquire the application if time is limited, but if thesis writers have enough time, they might use the free version. She assured that it would be possible to obtain the premium version with partners to split the cost. However, Tulipan mentioned that care must be taken when accepting recommendations:

> *One who is using it should be very careful, because if you take all the suggestions that Grammarly gives you in the end it' s going to be something that Grammarly wrote, not you / Uno que, que está utilizando esto debería tener mucho cuidado, porque si tú*

> *aceptas todas las sugerencias que te da Grammarly al final va a ser algo que escribió Grammarly, no tú* (*Individual interview 3).*

Niebla (Participant 4)

Niebla was 24 years old and lived with her sister and son. She is from the city of Cuenca and had to take a few buses to get to the university. She started using Grammarly when she was in her third semester at university motivated by a university. In her seventh semester, she decided to do a thesis as her degree project and use Grammarly again because she noticed that she was making grammatical mistakes. Niebla initially used the free version, but due to limited feedback, she decided to switch to the premium version to ensure that the quality of her thesis would be outstanding, in the following quote the participant justified:

> *I used the free version, for quite a long time almost most of the time I used the free one and then for reasons of force majeure, because of what I really needed my thesis to be perfect and then I opted to use the paid version / Utilice la gratuita, durante bastante tiempo casi la mayor parte del tiempo la utilice la gratuita y luego por motivos de fuerza mayor, por lo que realmente necesitaba que mi tesis quedará a la perfección y entonces opté por usar lo que es el pago (Individual interview 4).*

Among the features she found most helpful in the premium version was paraphrasing to improve ideas and eliminate repeated words. Another feature was plagiarism detection, which allowed her to know where it existed and be able to fix it. In addition, she learned from her mistakes and improved her writing, as she quoted in the following excerpt:

> *You learn from Grammarly because even there they give you the option to know the reason why it suggests you / Aprendes de Grammarly, porque incluso ahí te dan la opción de saber la razón por la cual te sugiere (Individual interview 3).*

Moreover, she pointed out that it saved her time because she did not search for information to find the reason for the suggestion. However, Niebla remarked that during the writing process, based on her knowledge, she verified that it used to give incorrect recommendations, such as eliminating words that had an essential role in the text. Although the cost of the premium version is high, she indicated that, in general, Grammarly enhanced the quality of the thesis. Niebla believed that, if she had not used it, she would have had plenty of errors.

Esmeralda (Participant 5)

Esmeralda was 24 years old and lived with her parents in Cuenca. When she was in her seventh semester, she decided to do a thesis, and because of the influence of a teacher, she used Grammarly as an extra help. At first, she used the free version, which indicated with colors what could be changed, but she did not know how to make the corrections. Therefore, she decided to get to the premium version because it provides extensive feedback. Nonetheless, the application cost was expensive, which led her to talk to other classmates to share the cost and benefit from it. Esmeralda mentioned that when starting to write her thesis, this application was a helpful option because she could see the mistakes she was making and correct them while learning at the same time, as the above-commented views are captured in the following quote:

> *The thesis, as you know, is extensive, so while I was using Grammarly, I was realizing, what words are redundant, or where a word was misspelled and if it made sense / La tesis, como saben, es extensa, entonces mientras iba utilizando Grammarly y me iba dando cuenta, qué palabras son redundantes, o dónde estaba mal escrito alguna palabra y si tenía sentido (Individual interview 5).*

During the writing process, she verified that the application was helpful, but she noticed that it sometimes made mistakes. For instance, during the data analysis section, where she had to write in passive voice, the application indicated that it was wrong, suggesting it should be in active voice. Despite dealing with some incorrect feedback, Esmeralda remarked that it helped her present a more academically suitable thesis. She concluded by stating that it would have been ideal to use this application from the first semester to hone her writing skills, the following quote affirmed this view:

> *Well, if I had learned about Grammarly when I had just started my first semester, I would have used it to start writing correctly / Pues si yo me hubiese enterado de Grammarly cuando recién empecé mi primer ciclo, lo habría utilizado para empezar a escribir correctamente (Individual interview 3).*

Themes emerged from data analysis

Five main themes emerged out of the data analysis: influences on the decision to use Grammarly, knowing why they started using Grammarly. The second theme was the features of Grammarly, describing the characteristics that identify this technological tool. The third one was the influence of Grammarly on the overall quality of thesis writing, whether they had a positive

or negative experience with their degree project. The fourth was the advantages and disadvantages Grammarly participants encountered during their thesis writing process. The last one was recommendations or suggestions for optimizing the use of Grammarly based on the participant's experience.

Table 2

Themes of the analysis that emerged about the use of Grammarly

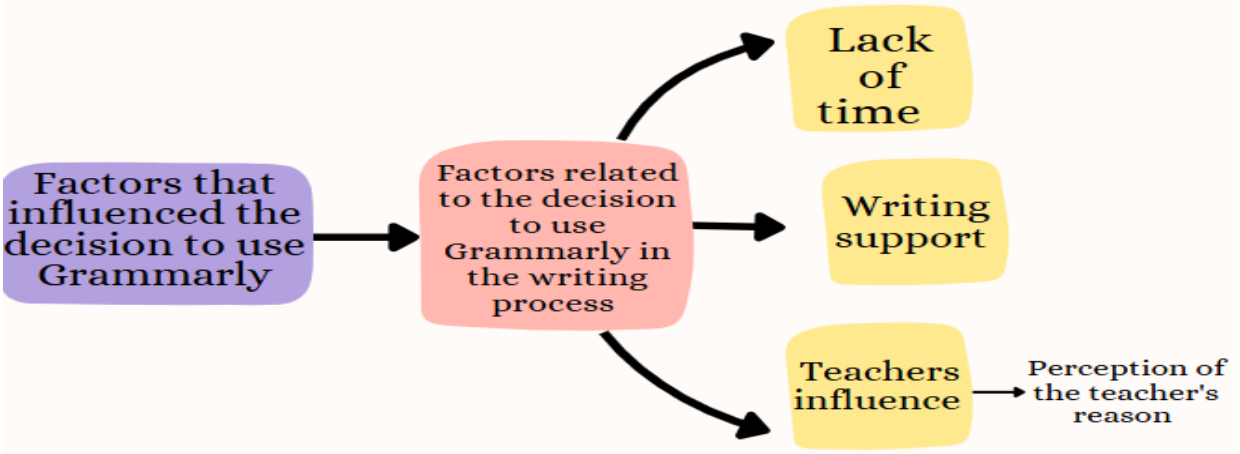
Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Sub-codes
Factors that influenced the decision to use Grammarly	Factors related to the decision to use Grammarly in the writing process	Lack of time	
		Writing support	
		Teachers influence	Perception of the teacher's reason
Features of Grammarly	Features of the free version	Grammar and spell-checking	
		Style how to show feedback	
		Limited feedback	
		Multiplatform integration	
	Features of the premium version	Writing suggestions	
		Tone suggestions	
		Style how to show feedback	
		Clear and detailed feedback	
		Plagiarism detection	
		Multiplatform integration	
		Price not affordable for students	

Advantages and disadvantages of Grammarly	Advantages of using Grammarly	Immediate feedback	
		Improving writing knowledge	
		Clarity and textual organization	
		Continuous positive reinforcement	
		Save time	
		Reducing stress	
	Disadvantages of using Grammarly	Incorrect suggestions	Discomfort with persistent suggestions
			Disagreement with suggestions own knowledge
		Limitation of multiplatform	
		Overconfidence	
Influence of Grammarly on the overall quality of thesis writing	Quality of Grammarly suggestions in the thesis	Enhance the quality of the thesis	
Recommendations or suggestions for optimizing Grammarly use	Ways to take advantage of Grammarly for the thesis	Writing Enrichment	
		For specific uses: long texts	
		To get the premium version	
		Being careful about suggestions	

Note. Elaborated from the analysis of the participants' experiences. Elaborated by Juela and Tenesaca (2025).

Figure 1

Factors that influenced the decision to use Grammarly



Note. Figure 1 indicates the factors that influenced graduates to use Grammarly in thesis writing. Elaborated by Juela and Tenesaca (2025).

Figure 1 provides an overview of the data collected in the personal interviews and the focus group. This visual representation has been carefully analyzed and classified into one main sub-theme: Aspects related to the decision to use Grammarly in the writing process. The codes were distributed as follows: lack of time, writing support, and teacher influences.

The results justify that some of the participants used the Grammarly tool in the thesis writing due to the lack of time to review grammatical errors since they had different activities both in their pre-professional and personal lives. For them, it was impossible to dedicate all the time to the thesis. Meanwhile, other participants indicated that they looked for Grammarly because they consider that writing in a second language can lead to spelling mistakes; thus, recognizing where the errors were helped them with this application. The following excerpt captured the participants' argument about using Grammarly for writing support:

> *...one of the factors was really that many times as learners of a second language, in this case English, we often make some spelling mistakes. And really the application, in this case, Grammarly, in my case, has helped me a lot to identify some spelling problems that sometimes I forgot like for example commas or maybe some words that are not well spelled in this case.... / ...uno de los factores fue realmente de que muchas veces como aprendices de la segunda lengua en este caso que es inglés, muchas veces cometemos algunos errores ortográficos. Y realmente la aplicación, en este caso, Grammarly, en mi caso me ha ayudado mucho a identificar algunos problemas ortográficos que a veces olvidó como por ejemplo comas o quizás algunas palabras que no están bien escritas en este caso… (Individual interview 5).*

Additionally, participants stated that they learned about Grammarly due to suggestions from university teachers, as both thesis tutors and the teacher of Unidad Curricular subject recommended that they use it to facilitate the revision process. In addition, during the focus group, participants discussed that these recommendations prompted them to continue using this tool to obtain a successful document.

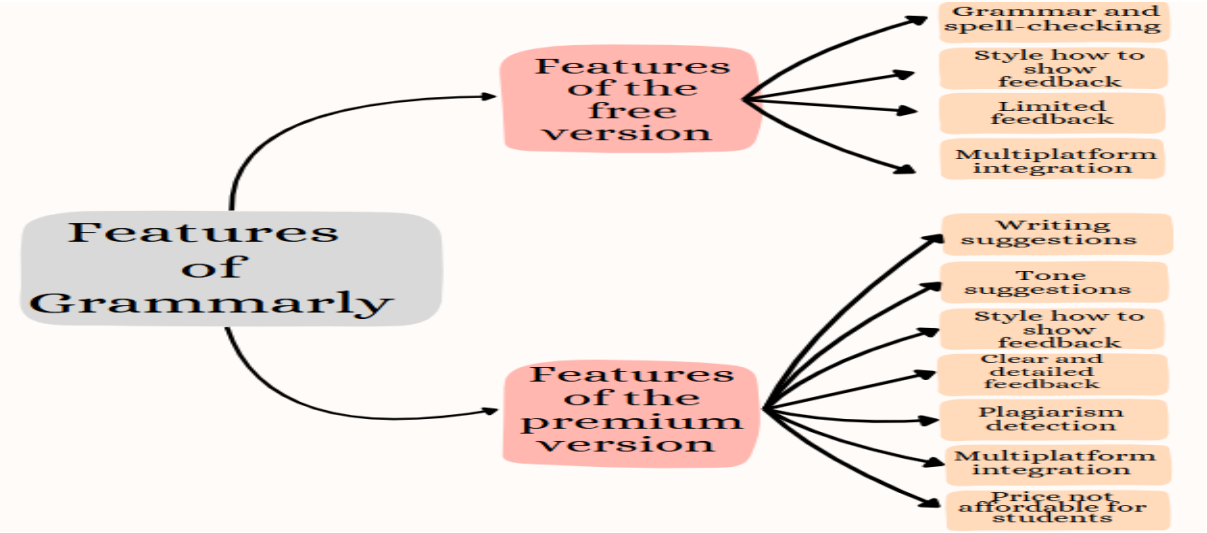
The participants considered that there are particular reasons why teachers suggest using Grammarly; they evaluate some tools that benefit students in the writing process or even based on personal experiences to see its benefits and effectiveness. Additionally, as a second language, students tend to make grammatical errors that may go unnoticed. The following excerpt reflected most of the arguments from graduates about the reasons they believe teachers recommend Grammarly:

> *I think that we are speaking, well, using in this case another language which is English. Many times, we tend to make grammatical mistakes, so this is an essential tool to be able to identify where we have to correct… / Yo creo que ya sea, nosotros estamos hablando, bueno, utilizando en este caso otra lengua y en este caso que es el inglés. Entonces, muchas veces tendemos a cometer quizás errores gramaticales entonces esta es una herramienta esencial que sea para poder identificar dónde tenemos que corregir… (Focus group).*

Many participants selected to use Grammarly due to the lack of time to review their thesis. This agrees with Alotaibi (2023), who stated that this tool enables users to have instant feedback. They also admitted that they decided to use this application because its features allowed them to proofread their writing and correct errors, making it easier to write the thesis in a second language. This agrees with Fahmi and Cahyono (2021), who argued that Grammarly benefits students in detecting and correcting grammatical errors. In addition, some of them were influenced to use this application due to a recommendation received from their teachers, which they perceived as trustworthy. It relates to what Daher et al. (2017) referred to as the experiences involving active interpretation and construction of meaning through reflective thinking. In this case, the recommendation can be actively interpreted, contributing to the reflective decision to use Grammarly.

Figure 2

Features of Grammarly



Note. Figure 2 describes the features of the Grammarly versions (free and premium) that were mentioned by the participants. Elaborated by Juela and Tenesaca (2025).

Figure 2 represents the characteristics of Grammarly, both the free and the premium versions. In the free version, there are different features that the university students found during the process of grammar and spell-checking, such as the style of showing feedback, limited feedback, and multiplatform integration. Meanwhile, in the premium version, features such as the following were highlighted: writing suggestions, tone suggestions, style of how to show feedback, clear and detailed feedback, plagiarism detection, multiplatform integration, and prices not affordable for students.

In the free version, most participants described Grammarly as offering basic but essential functions such as correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar. In addition, it underlined the style of displaying the feedback engagingly and helpfully; however, it was limited because it

does not have all the functions, which was frustrating when it detected the error but did not mention how to correct it, as stated in the following excerpt:

> *It becomes a little frustrating, sometimes, let' s say, in the free, we are only left with doubts because they give us like three alternatives, so it could be why it is yellow, tomato, something like that, it is yellow if I' m not wrong, but it is not like it gives us something conclusive that we can analyze and know* / *se vuelve un poquito frustrante, a veces, digamos, en la free, solamente nos quedamos con dudas, porque es que nos ponen como tres alternativas, así posiblemente que puede ser el por qué está con el color amarillo, tomate, algo así, es amarilla, sino estoy mal, pero no es que es como que nos da algo contundente que nosotros podamos analizar y saber*" *(Individual interview 1).*

Albeit, this version offers the possibility to integrate multiple platforms, which benefits the user by allowing them to access corrections in real time without interrupting the writing process. It did not fully help participants to improve their thesis due to the lack of feedback significantly.

On the other hand, of the majority participants described the premium version as a complete writing application as it not only includes all the functions of the free version but also has additional features that facilitate the writing process. One of them is writing suggestions such as synonyms, avoiding a very repetitive and tiring text to read. Likewise, Grammarly suggested that long or meaningless parts of the text be modified.

They recognized that the tone suggestion function is essential because the participants used to write informally; therefore, Grammarly suggested they change the tone of the academic

text to a formal one. The information provided was detailed and attractive due to the different colors of the text, which made it easy for the public to understand.

The following excerpt points out the role of this feature in detecting plagiarism in the text, as it is often used to check that texts are entirely original and free of plagiarism, as there are frequently coincidences with other research papers. The following excerpt pointed out the role of this feature of Grammarly:

> *I chose to use this for plagiarism, and it helped me a lot in identifying the specific moments where I was making mistakes and what I needed to improve. It practically pointed out where I was failing, and even some words that might not be flagged but were repeated frequently, making it seem like plagiarism. This helped me improve my writing overall and ensured that I no longer had issues with plagiarism. Obviously, plagiarism is very important in thesis writing / Yo opté por utilizar esto para el plagio y me ha ayudado muchísimo en qué momento específicamente estoy fallando en lo que debo mejorar y prácticamente me indicaba que en qué lo que estaba fallando e incluso algunas palabras que quizás no indica, o sea que yo estoy haciendo plagio sin más bien son muy repetidas, entonces lo contaban como plagio, entonces eso me ayudó a mejorar toda mi redacción y en sí para que ya no tenga plagio y obviamente. Porque plagio es muy importante en una redacción de tesis (Individual interview 4).*

In addition, participants who used the premium versions commented that they could use it on more platforms than the free version. Nevertheless, despite the features described in this section, some participants stated that the price of the premium version could be an obstacle, as it

was not accessible to all university students. Because they had personal expenses and not all had a steady job or additional income, having all the money in one payment was not straightforward. It limits access to the public, as shown in the following excerpt:

> *As a student, I do not have a steady job or not, or I simply do not have a job. Then there are the expenses of going to the university in going back and forth, buses, the issue of supplies, although it is not much that is bought for the university, but the main issue would be the economic / no como estudiante no tiene un trabajo fijo o no, o simplemente no tiene un trabajo. Entonces son los gastos de ir a la universidad en idas y vueltas, buses, el tema de útiles, aunque no es mucho que se compra para la universidad, pero el principal tema sería lo económico (Personal interview 2).*

It is worth mentioning whether the participants purchased the premium version. It was because they shared the cost with other students who were doing the thesis. In that way, the price was less than the initial one.

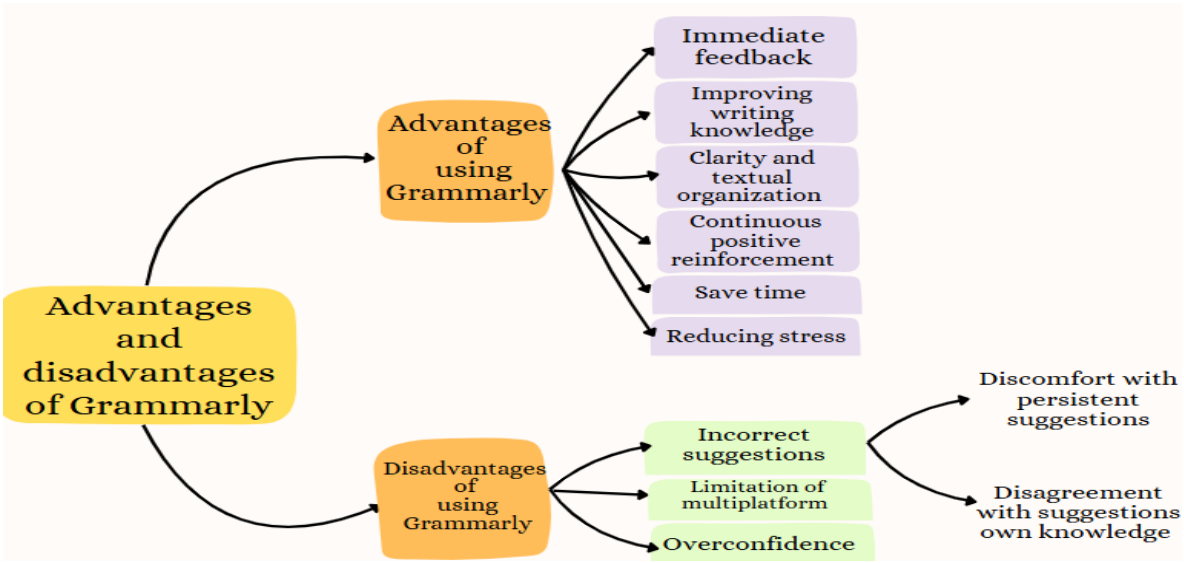
The participants highlighted that in the two versions of Grammarly, they detected grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, which helped them to improve their thesis. It is in alignment with Lestari (2020), who mentioned that writers of an academic text have to pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation when writing a text, remarking on the importance of these functions of the application. Furthermore, the visual feedback with colors was functional, which facilitates detection and correction. It agrees with Nova (2018), who stated that although Grammarly provides clarity in feedback, sometimes its comments are misleading.

Nevertheless, Astuti et al. (2023) noted the feedback of the free version of Grammarly has certain limitations.

On the other hand, the participants of this study who used the premium version emphasized the functions of tone suggestions and plagiarism detection that enabled them to obtain a formal and original thesis. It is in line with Dewi (2022), who confirmed that the premium version of this application allows for a more complete revision. In addition, they noted that Grammarly can be used on different platforms, which made it easier for them to obtain instant corrections. As Grammarly (2024) noted, this feature allows them to work faster since it avoids switching applications. Although the premium version provides more detailed feedback, participants commented that the cost was not affordable for a student in comparison to the free version, which, as stated by Hermansyah et al. (2024), allows solutions to be obtained at no cost.

Figure 3

Advantages and disadvantages of Grammarly



Note. Figure 3 shows the advantages and disadvantages that participants noted when using Grammarly. Elaborated by Juela and Tenesaca (2025).

This figure depicts the advantages and disadvantages that participants noted while using Grammarly. The advantages section highlights immediate feedback, improving writing knowledge, clarity and textual organization, continuous positive reinforcement, saving time, and reducing stress. The disadvantages of Grammarly are incorrect suggestions, multiplatform limitations, and overconfidence.

Immediate feedback created a valuable advantage for the participants by allowing them to correct errors instantly. It facilitated uninterrupted writing when there was a flow of ideas. It also streamlined the work of revising the writing, as noted in the following quote:

> *... at that moment you are inspired to write the text. Then, Grammarly says to you: Look, you have this mistake, so you correct it and go on. So, I do see it as very fruitful to have immediate feedback / ... en ese momento tú estás inspirado a escribir el texto. Entonces, como que Grammarly en ese momento te dice: Mira, tienes este error entonces tú corriges y sigues y no es que después tengas que volver otra vez a revisar si es que hay algún error o no. Entonces yo sí lo veo muy, fructífero tener un feedback inmediato (Focus Group).*

This technological tool not only corrected their mistakes but also helped them to improve their knowledge of grammar or vocabulary because they also learned from the recommendations they received. Additionally, the participants mentioned that the feedback facilitated the text to be

clear, coherent, and concise, facilitating the creation of organized documents according to academic writing.

This constant feedback created positive reinforcement in the participants as a motivation to improve their writing skills. They also describe it as time-saving even though one must later revisit the corrections made by Grammarly as assured by the participants. The following quote described it:

> *...for instance, imagine reviewing the whole document without Grammarly from the beginning, that is, we are not going to compare three hours with one hour to review it with Grammarly. So, I think that above all, it helps to save time / ...por ejemplo imagínense revisar sin Grammarly desde un principio todo el documento, o sea, no vamos a comparar unas tres horas con una hora que se venga a revisar con Grammarly. Entonces creo que sobre todo si ayuda ahorrar tiempo (Focus group).*

Indeed, they even gained the advantage of reducing stress as Grammarly facilitated the thesis review, which alleviated the exhaustion of a thorough review. It made it easier for participants to focus on reviewing the content, thereby avoiding the fatigue of reviewing each word manually, as the following extract justified:

> *...I save stress, because imagine there were about twelve thousand and more words that we had to write, so to do all that process oneself revising paragraph by paragraph, everything reading again in that aspect was very tiring, too tiring / ...me ahorro estrés, porque imagínate, fueron como doce mil y más palabras que teníamos que escribir, entonces hacer todo ese proceso, uno, uno misma o uno, claro, uno misma, revisar*

> *párrafo por párrafo, leer todo de nuevo y todo, en ese aspecto era muy cansado, demasiado cansado (Individual interview 3).*

Although Grammarly stands out as a valuable tool during thesis writing, it had certain disadvantages that the graduates noted, such as incorrect feedback that was confusing because it tended to be out of context. Consequently, this created disagreement with the suggestions, since they described it as a tedious factor caused by the insistence on making the adjustment when the participants claimed there was no need to make any such changes in their writing. It should be emphasized that the disagreement was based on their knowledge, leading them to evaluate and decide whether to accept or dismiss Grammarly's suggestions, as the following extract demonstrated:

> *If I saw that Grammarly' s suggestion was better, then obviously I would change it, but when there were errors, check that it is right when making the decision to change or not / sí veía que era mejor la sugerencia de Grammarly, entonces obviamente la cambiaba, pero en cuanto ya cuando había errores, entonces obviamente verifica que esté bien al momento de tomar la decisión de cambiar o no (Grupo Focal).*

On the other hand, as discussed in the features of Grammarly, it can be used on different platforms. Independently of which version they used, the participants stated that Grammarly worked better when they uploaded the text in the application. At the same time, the extensions overlooked the corrections or merely did not work at all.

The overconfidence in Grammarly was another disadvantage. At times, participants in the writing process commented to view the application as a definitive solution rather than a helpful

tool. It is not to say that Grammarly is misleading, but it can provoke dependency, reducing the effort put into developing writing skills if not used critically and in a balanced manner.

The main advantages highlighted by participants were the immediate feedback and the creation of knowledge, as they corrected and learned from their mistakes simultaneously. It aligned with Alotaibi (2023), who stated that immediate feedback allows students to learn from their errors. Furthermore, participants emphasized that the application helped reduce stress, as they did not have to review the entire document for errors manually. This, motivated them to improve their writing skills. It is supported by Wardatin (2022), who mentioned that two of the five advantages of using Grammarly are increased motivation and satisfaction.

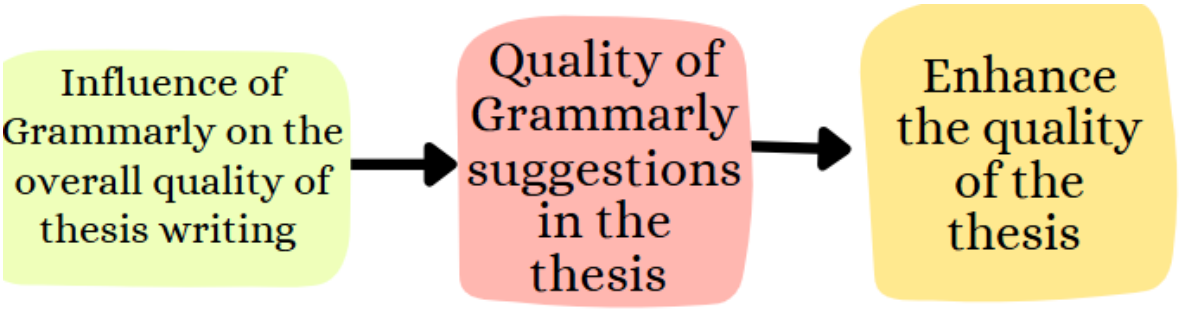
Participants stated that the comments were frequently confusing and out of context. Nevertheless, they utilized their knowledge to evaluate the suggestions, discarding or validating them. This coincided with what Nova (2018) pointed out weaknesses of the application are erroneous feedback and limitation of contextual evaluation. Nonetheless, Angel and Borbor (2023) stressed that while Grammarly helps improve texts, writers must understand the basics to apply the suggestions effectively.

Another limitation that participants noted was that the application did not work correctly on other platforms, requiring them to log in to the main page. This experience was a discrepancy with Grammarly (2024), which claimed that the multiplatform feature allows faster writing without distractions from switching between applications. Participants also noticed that during the review process, they occasionally saw Grammarly as the ultimate solution, fostering dependency on the application. It is aligned with Gonzales (2024), who exposed that although

some people only see this application as merely an additional aid, others recognize that it can create dependency.

Figure 4

Influence of Grammarly on the overall quality of thesis writing



Note. Figure 4 shows the overall quality of the thesis along with Grammarly based on the graduates' experiences. Elaborated by Juela and Tenesaca (2025).

Figure 4 shows how the quality of the Grammarly suggestions has influenced the whole thesis, and the results reflect a favorable view. Through the data collection instruments, it has been highlighted that this tool was crucial to improve the writing and meet the standard of a thesis.

Although some participants mentioned that this tool did not meet their perspectives, they considered that it offered support in grammar, punctuation, and plagiarism, which allowed the degree work to have the expected quality at the end. This improvement in writing was considered essential, as without Grammarly's help, students claimed that the thesis would not have reached the required academic level, as the following quote highlighted:

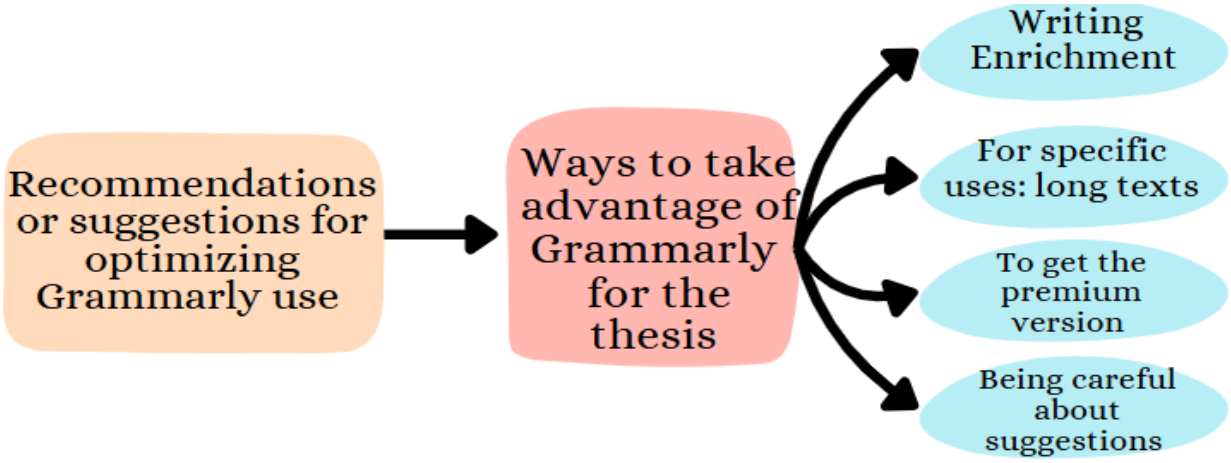
> *I think it would have been different if I had not used Grammarly, because the fact that one wants to send a good writing, like a good grammar, is something important, well, for an academic text and I think that if I had not used Grammarly it would not have been. No, I' m not going to say that it is good, good at all, but it would not have been with a quality that should be, for example, in one as a student. At the time of writing the thesis you don' t think about the level that should be written, because obviously we at the university have to have a high level of English, so sometimes we do not use the right words and I think that without those suggestions it would not have been the academic text / Yo creo que sí hubiera sido diferente si no usaba Grammarly, porque el hecho de que uno quiera mandar con una buena escritura, como una buena gramática. Es algo importante, pues para un texto académico y creo que si no hubiera usado el Grammarly no hubiera estado. No, no voy a decir que está bien, bien del todo, pero no hubiera estado con una calidad que debería de estar, por ejemplo, en uno como estudiante. En el momento de redactar la tesis no se pone a pensar en el nivel que debe escribirse, porque obviamente nosotros en la universidad tenemos que tener un nivel alto de inglés, entonces a veces no usamos las palabras correctas y creo que sin esas sugerencias no hubiera sido el texto académico (Individual interview).*

The participants concluded that despite some mistakes made by the application, it helped them to obtain a high-quality thesis. It was consistent with the studies of Fitriana and Nurazni (2022) and Angel and Borbor (2023), who recorded, that Grammarly helped to improve the clarity of written texts, in spite of its limitations. Generally, the tool was considered essential in

the writing process, contributing to the presentation of the project aligned with academic standards.

Figure 5

Recommendations or suggestions for optimizing Grammarly use



Note. Figure 5 provides recommendations or suggestions that graduates shared on making profitable use of Grammarly. Elaborated by Juela and Tenesaca (2025).

According to Figure 5, the graduates gave various ways to take advantage of Grammarly for the thesis, which are writing enrichment, for specific uses: long texts, getting the premium version, for personal benefit, and being careful in the suggestions. These results enabled future students to adapt the tool depending on individual needs and optimize the writing experience.

The results recommend using Grammarly to enhance the thesis, as participants' experiences indicate that it contributed to making the written text clear and concise. Additionally, they suggested using it from the beginning of the writing process and in sections to

prevent revisions from accumulating, thus avoiding a tiresome process and reducing word redundancy. This technological tool is particularly beneficial for academic texts, which tend to be lengthy, such as articles, essays, or theses, as it helps improve clarity and coherence in works that require detailed proofreading.

Obtaining the premium version proves to be effective, offering a variety of features such as tone suggestions and plagiarism detection, which participants pointed out the most during individual interviews. Additionally, they believed that if writers do not have full time to complete their thesis, this version aids save time in the process. Although the cost is high, sharing the expense with colleagues who are also working on the thesis would be an essential recommendation, as this will provide a mutual benefit and comprehensive support in academic writing, as reflected in the following quote:

> *...it is obviously expensive, but you can buy it as a team. In this case I bought with my friends and there is a quota. So yes, yes it was a bit expensive, but it is really very useful for doing research work in this case / ...es obviamente caro, pero se puede comprar en equipo. En este caso yo compré con mis amigas y queda una cuota. Entonces sí, sí fue un poco caro, pero realmente es muy útil para realizar los trabajos de investigación en este caso (Individual interview 5).*

However, they advised that if students have enough time to make a thesis, they should use the free version and save money.

As evidenced in the disadvantages section, Grammarly recommends incorrect or out-of-context suggestions; therefore, it was suggested that participants be careful with them.

Consequently, it must be reviewed again, albeit having reviewed with Grammarly since it is not substituted as a human review that has critical thinking, as suggested by the following excerpt where it justifies the above-mentioned:

> *Well, being an AI, it is not always going to be correct, so as my classmates mentioned, we must be alert and analyze ourselves what we want to write or what we want to transmit because there were times when I was writing the, the thesis with one subject and yet Grammarly used to change with another subject or gender, so that is why we must be alert, because not being an AI is going to be correct / Bueno al ser una IA no siempre va a estar en lo correcto entonces ya como mencionaron mis compañeras debemos estar pendientes y nosotros mismo analizar qué es lo que queremos escribir o qué es lo que queremos transmitir porque había veces que yo estaba escribiendo la, la tesis con un sujeto y sin embargo Grammarly solía cambiarse con otro sujeto o sea el género entonces por eso hay que estar pendientes ya que no por ser una IA va a ser todo correcto (Focus group).*

The participants advised using Grammarly for thesis writing, as Angel and Borbor (2023) agreed that its use helped improve the coherence of written texts. It benefited the clarity of the thesis, aligning with Lestari (2020), who emphasized that the purpose of an academic text was to be understandable to the reader.

On the other hand, participants recommended obtaining the premium version, sharing the cost with classmates would be a profitable option, they noted that it provided detailed feedback, particularly in tone suggestions and plagiarism detection, while saving more time than the free

version. It was consistent with Dewi (2022), who stated that the premium version offered more comprehensive features. However, participants also indicated that if there was sufficient time to complete the thesis, the free version could be used to save money. This was supported by Hermansyah et al. (2024), who argued that the free version allowed text evaluation without additional costs. Participants remarked that thesis writers had to be cautious when accepting Grammarly's suggestions, which were not always accurate. It aligned with Gautam (2019), who claimed that writing requires critical thinking to evaluate and adjust ideas based on the text's needs.

V. Conclusion

The results of this research provided valuable information about PINE graduates' experiences with the use of Grammarly in the thesis manuscript process. The objectives were addressed as follows: to describe the useful features of Grammarly, to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of this tool, and to analyze the influence of it on the overall quality of theses.

This study revealed that the valuable features of Grammarly while writing a thesis, both free and premium versions, were correcting grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, as well as the visual feedback based on colors, as they described it as helpful in facilitating the proofreading process. Regarding the premium version, the participants highlighted the functions of tone suggestion and plagiarism detection, which contribute to developing a formal and original thesis.

The advantages and disadvantages of integrating Grammarly into the thesis were reflected. The immediate feedback was one of the main advantages they appointed since it allowed them to learn from errors in real-time, improving the clarity and organization of the texts. It was also recognized as a key factor in saving time, reducing stress in revision, and increasing motivation to continue writing. However, the results recognized disadvantages such as incorrect feedback outside of context. Therefore, critical thinking was required to be applied by the participants. Another disadvantage is the cost of purchasing the premium version; although it offers advanced features, it is inaccessible to all students.

Despite Grammarly's limitations, its influence on the overall quality of the thesis was positive because its use allowed participants to obtain a work clear, coherent, and with few

grammatical errors. It coincided with previous studies that concluded that this tool is advantageous for improving written texts. Nonetheless, the importance of critically analyzing the suggestions was emphasized by participants.

It is worth mentioning that during this research, several recommendations emerged for future students. They recommended acquiring the premium version in cooperation with other classmates because it contains beneficial features. However, they acknowledged that the free version could be a favorable alternative for students who have enough time to complete a thesis. In addition, they advised to be aware of the erroneous suggestions Grammarly provides, underlining how vital it is to review them critically.

In conclusion, this research highlighted the fundamental role of Grammarly as a support tool for PINE graduates while writing their theses. Nevertheless, its problems underscore the importance of complementing this technological tool with the writing skills acquired throughout the academic training. Regardless of its limitations, it enhanced the quality of the thesis value and confidence in thesis writing.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, several recommendations can be accomplished for future research. This study focused on the graduates of PINE at UNAE University. Consequently, it is suggested that future studies be conducted with students from different universities to gain a broader perspective on the role Grammarly can play in academic writing. Additionally, it is recommended that a long-term evaluation be performed to assess how the constant use of this application benefits or affects the users. On the other hand, this research

found that some teachers recommended using this application. Thus, it would be valuable to obtain their perspectives and experiences to provide a broader view of its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, given that there are currently a variety of AI applications that can facilitate the revision of written texts, it is recommended to study other applications similar to Grammarly to conduct comparisons and efficiency evaluations.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview instrument:

The semi-structured interview was created to gather information from five PINE graduates to learn about their experiences using Grammarly.

This interview is part of the research "Experiences of PINE graduates in using Grammarly for undergraduate thesis revision". The main objective of this interview is to explore the experiences of 5 PINE “Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages” graduates in using Grammarly in the process of undergraduate thesis writing. Please be informed that this interview is completely confidential, and your identity is not revealed at any time. If you have any questions or concerns during the interview, please feel free to let us know.

Warm-up question: what activities do you like to do on the weekends?

1. What were the factors or events that led you to use Grammarly?

2. As you know, there are two versions of Grammarly, premium and free, which of the two versions of Grammarly did you use for your thesis manuscript revision? Why?

3. What features of Grammarly did you use for the writing of your thesis?

4. What do you think of the feedback you received from Grammarly on your thesis based on the version you used?

5. Do you think Grammarly helped you improve the overall quality of your thesis? Why?

6. From your perspective, what are the advantages of Grammarly?

7. In your experience, what are the limitations or disadvantages of Grammarly?

8. How would you describe your experience using the free/premium version of Grammarly in your writing process?

9. How do you think the use of Grammarly could be leveraged to help improve the quality of undergraduate theses?

10. Anything else you would like to share about your experience with Grammarly?

11. What recommendations would you give to other PINE students on how to take advantage of Grammarly for a better thesis writing process?

Appendix 2

Focus group instrument

Welcome to be part of our research, and thank you for your willingness to participate. This focus group is part of the research entitled "Experiences of PINE graduates in using Grammarly for undergraduate thesis revision". The main objective of this focus group is to explore the experiences of PINE graduate students with Grammarly in thesis revision. Through this focus group, we intend to deepen information from the individual interviews conducted, to obtain data through an interaction and discussion among you generating different answers and points of view. As instructed, you are going to be called participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, participant 4, participant 5. This interaction is going to be in charge of a moderator who is going to guide you with the questions during this process. We remind you that there is no right or wrong answer, we only want to know your opinions and experiences, as well as to have a respectful and friendly environment, so when you decide to contribute with ideas, please raise

your hand. It is important to mention that the information is used for academic purposes only and that your identity is not revealed.

1. What do you think about the use of AI tools such as Grammarly in general?

2. Why do you think teachers suggest using Grammarly?

3. Do you think that Grammarly helped you to fulfill the standards of the thesis?

4. As you know, Grammarly has the feature of using colors to point out grammatical mistakes, so what are the benefits you found when you saw the different colors as feedback in your writing when using Grammarly?

5. In the interviews it was identified that most of you claim that Grammarly gives wrong suggestions. So, do you think that Grammarly helped you to produce a clearer and more organized text? Why?

6. Did you feel obliged to adapt to the suggestions given by the application? Why?

7. What specific feature would you consider essential for the review of your thesis manuscript that is not included in the free version?

8. How does it help you to receive immediate feedback?

9. Considering that you have to revise again after having applied Grammarly' s suggestions to your text, then how useful has Grammarly been to you in saving your time?

10. During the interviews it was known that by using Grammarly you acquired and improved your knowledge, so why do you think that using Grammarly helped you to learn from the mistakes you used to make when writing?

11. How do you compare the quality of the Grammarly suggestions in contrast to the observations or suggestions made by your thesis tutor? Focusing on grammatical suggestions.

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Appendix 3

Consent form for the implementation of the study

Informed consent form

We are Carolina Tenesaca and Jimmy Juela, students of the National University of Education (UNAE) of the Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages (PINE). We are currently conducting research entitled "Experiences of PINE graduates in using Grammarly for undergraduate thesis revision". The objective of this research is to explore the experiences of PINE graduates with the use of Grammarly in the process of writing their undergraduate thesis manuscripts. This is an undergraduate thesis research study to fulfill the degree requirement. The data obtained from the interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed without adding personal information, thus maintaining your confidentiality and using the information only for research purposes. Your decision to be part of this research is voluntary, and you agree that there will be no remuneration for participating in this study. Please keep a copy of this informed consent form for your files. If you have questions or doubts during any time of the study process you can contact with Carolina Tenesaca at anicaro1228@gmail.com, cell: 0997131251, or Jimmy Juela at jimmyc50@hotmail.com, cell: 0959788217.

Statement of Consent: I have read the description of this study and declare that I have been informed and invited to participate. Furthermore, all my questions have been clearly answered and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will keep a copy of this consent for my files.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

Appendix 4

Link to participants' signatures on the informed consent form:

https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/ETUZkS1HEGBHje0FKFFGEa0BNGl9ooj-l6XYezT4_MZpkw

Appendix 5

Link to the transcript of individual interviews:

Interview 1:

https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/EatAl_XUn9NNgqX61UOZXSMBlQ11cTQ3yc8-rWEbY1BCRQ

Interview 2:

https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/ER6wo94eVQtClUWF_aacmK4Bqqx7fjGj8edCxHOiurho1g

Interview 3:

https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/EfSjDSuKGVJMpEpXqDw9bXMBWTJScsRnDMhwfMwuTMSlBA

Interview 4:

https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/EQ763SgHBspOoGw1iRBv56IBNFZbxoFF8BChm0iOfJhyDg

Interview 5: https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/ERZLvgaHm-lHul7mzsnFE1EBp4_WrEhwqGgRjOBh1O6NQg

Link to the transcript of the focus group discussion:

https://1drv.ms/w/c/e16a02cc714a8a2d/EfyYetyYBudGvukPLUXcDPQBOnZgeMf3mPJyebnn_Lc7OQ

Appendix 6

Link to the recordings of individual interviews:

Interview 1:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12ORgmTZWFPeiIZmKwRsdc7RltxT3PxQt/view?usp=sharing

Interview 2:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zh4PCY4cB8duo02R1PmtNhlwhW2_ErMP/view?usp=drivesdk

Interview 3:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12cX_ZoYjkx3OHVDmVOoTDcsLnZvPAsNf/view?usp=drivesdk

Interview 4:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qqgl9lYoOk2QG9nqyTp9CB7IrMZdd_NT/view?usp=drivesdk

Interview 5:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mHAIS7E9HHHdH5ynxp2OyyRT0jZsUb_x/view?usp=drivesdk

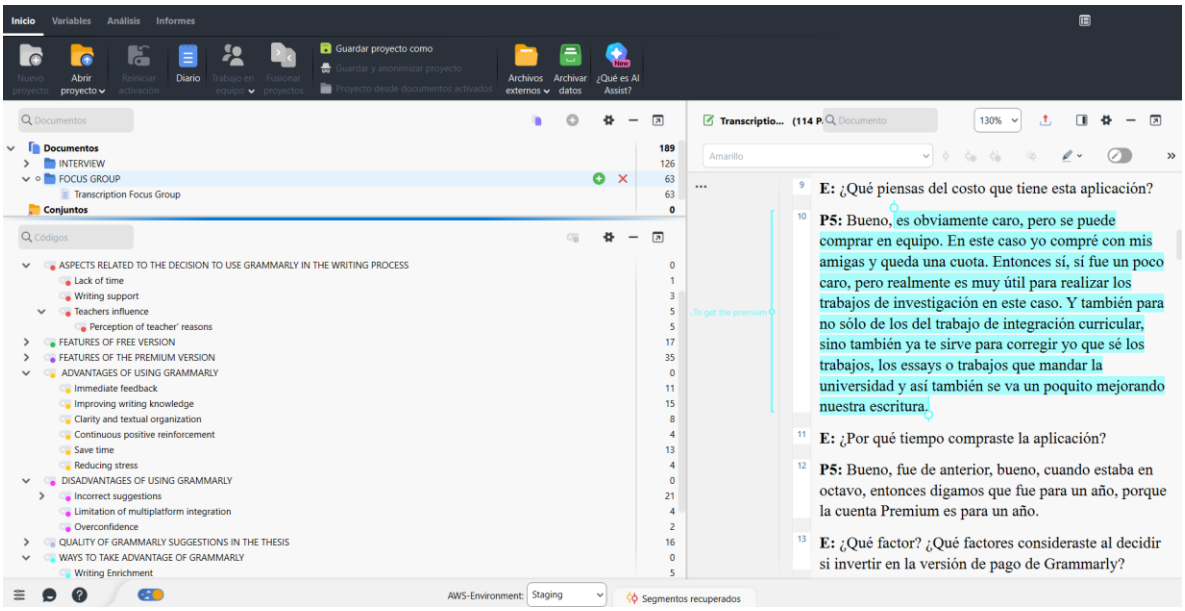
Appendix 7

Link of the recordings of FGD:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12aAmyxcoqeO0hq0qmOe0ngA7in3F-dKk/view?usp=drivesdk

Appendix 8

Captures of using software MAXQDA



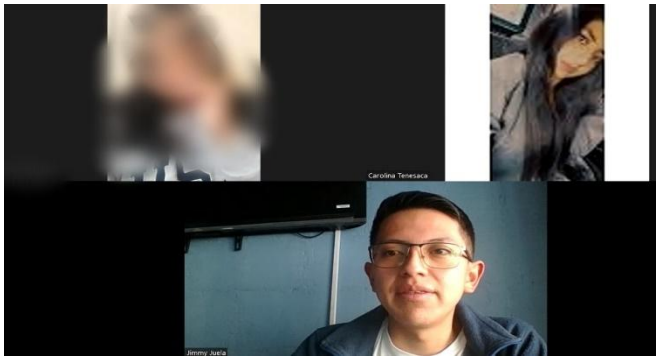
Appendix 9

Photos of participants during the individual interview and FGD

Interview 1:



Interview 2:



Interview 3:



Interview 4:



Interview 5:



Focus group discussion:

