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## **Exploring the Role of Grammarly in Enhancing Punctuation Accuracy among EFL Learners at Intermediate Level**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims at exploring the use of Grammarly in enhancing punctuation accuracy among intermediate students of Steps College at Rawalpindi District Pakistan. With significant increase in use of AI powered tools in second language (L2) writing context, Grammarly has emerged as one of the most widely used and effective AI-based writing assistant, utilized by over 30 million users worldwide. To investigate the impact of Grammarly this study follows a quantitative design. Data were collected from 45 students of eleventh grade, selected using a purposive sampling. The design of study is pre-experimental research comprising of a pretest and a posttest after using Grammarly as practice tool. Findings suggest that Grammarly has a significant effect on students' Punctuation accuracy in eleventh grade at Steps College Rawalpindi. Finding also reveal that improvement has not limited to one or two students but has observed across all five participants, suggesting that the tool has broad applicability and effectiveness. Results also indicate the magnitude of improvement varies among students, with some achieving excellent performance while others have reached good or average levels, indicating that while Grammarly is effective, individual learning capacity and engagement also play important roles. The findings have important implications for educators seeking effective methods to improve student writing mechanics and suggest that Grammarly and similar tools should be incorporated into regular classroom instruction to support students who face challenges with punctuation and other aspects of writing mechanism.

**Keywords:** Punctuation Accuracy, AI Integration, Grammarly

### **Introduction**

There is no doubt that EFL learners face a lot of challenges in writing among all the four skills, not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also translating these ideas into comprehensible text with good grammar (Maharani, 2018). They find it difficult to achieve grammatical accuracy in their writing despite years of grammatical drill by following the traditional methods and still continue to make recurring errors, particularly in grammar, sentence structure and punctuation. With advancement in technology there is a significant shift in language teaching as well. As now for improving writing proficiency different AI powered tools are available to assist ELF learners. Grammarly is also one of the most widely used automatic writing evaluation applications, created in 2009 by two Ukrainian developers named Maz Lytvyn and Alex Shevchenko (Fernando & Suryaman, 2022) which provides writing assistance to students as well as teachers. By checking one's text with Grammarly, one receives instant feedback on spelling, punctuation and grammar. It has two version, Pro version is recommended for professional or academic writing, while the free version is suitable for basic needs. To



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investigate the effectiveness of Grammarly Alotaibi,(2023) has conducted a survey among Saudi students investigating effectiveness of Grammarly in enhancing language learning and finds that Grammarly serves as an effective and reliable assistant in identifying grammatical errors and improving clarity in writing but also points out overreliance on AI tools where meaning might be inadvertently altered. Similarly Fitria,(2021) reveals that there is a significant increase in students' scores from pretest 34 to posttest 77 that indicates student's quality of writing is increased after using Grammarly premium version as compared to free version that has limited features. In the same vain Thompson and Kelly (2023) find students' positive attitudes toward Grammarly. Survey results show that nearly 80% of students consider it one of the best writing resources available to them, to achieve clarity, errors correction and to enhance professionalism in writing. However, study also highlights several instructional challenges. Students sometimes encounter technical difficulties, misunderstand certain recommendations, or over-rely on the tool. Grammarly has an important role in gaining clarity, correctness, and confidence-building, especially among students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. On the other hand, Bailey and Lee (2020) has examined the use of Grammarly in different writing contexts and report that social media posts exhibit the greatest clarity after applying Grammarly corrections. This improvement was seen in the shorter sentence lengths and simpler word choices characteristic of SNS-based writing, compared with textbook-based or test-based texts. The study also highlights that Grammarly is particularly effective in identifying and correcting local, surface-level errors, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but is less effective in addressing higher-order writing concerns, including organization, coherence, and argumentation. Similarly, Tran Kieu My an (2025) in their study have found that the use of Grammarly as an online language testing and writing support tool presents both advantages and limitations. Their findings indicate that Grammarly can be particularly beneficial for second-year students with limited class time, as it allows them to engage with the application independently at home. The tool effectively corrects errors in spelling, word choice, and quantifiers, though it does not always consider the sentence as a whole. This limitation can occasionally lead to unintended alterations of the author's intended meaning, Therefore, it is crucial for learners to ensure that language is used both contextually and structurally correctly, so that automated corrections support rather than distort the intended message. Dizon and Gayed (2024) have conducted a systematic review of 24 empirical studies published between 2009 and 2023, focusing on Grammarly's application in L2 contexts. Their findings reveal that Grammarly is predominantly used among university-level learners, with most studies employing quantitative or mixed-method designs and short-term interventions lasting less than 15 weeks. The review highlights Grammarly's effectiveness in addressing surface-level writing issues such as grammar, spelling, and mechanics. However, it also underscores the tool's limitations, particularly in providing guidance on higher-order writing skills, including organization, coherence, and argumentation. Jelita, Daud, and Masyhur (2023) have explored the role of Grammarly as a writing assistant in enhancing students' writing abilities and indicates that Grammarly significantly improves high school students' writing quality, particularly in grammatical accuracy, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization and result shows measurable improvement in students' writing scores between pre-tests and post-tests, demonstrating its potential as an effective writing tool. Previous studies have approached the use of Grammarly mostly to investigate academic writing proficiency in different context and highlights challenges and limitations while using it. However, present study aims at exploring effectiveness of Grammarly in



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enhancing the punctuation accuracy among intermediate students at Steps College Rawalpindi. None of the reviewed studies, to the best of our knowledge, have examined punctuation accuracy in Pakistani context while using Grammarly as practice tool. This represents a significant research gap that this study aims to address. This study aims at exploring

How effective is Grammarly as an AI-based tool for enhancing punctuation accuracy among intermediate EFL learners?

To what extent does Grammarly help reduce punctuation errors in students' written work?

### Method

#### Research Design

The paradigm of this study is the quantitative research. The study design was a pre-experimental research design using pretest-posttest. The data were collected among Intermediate the twelfth-grade students of Steps College Rawalpindi in this case. At first a Pre-test was conducted by asking the students to punctuate 20 sample sentences. The purpose of the test was to analyse common punctuation errors among intermediate students. Then treatment was given to them by teaching punctuation rules and practicing punctuation by using Grammarly daily for ten minutes. After one month of treatment, a posttest was conducted for 5 students who scored below class average score. Briefly, The research procedures used were as follows:

Before the pretest, students were given a mini lecture about use of punctuation, in which they were told about the rules for each punctuation mark. After that, students were asked to punctuate 20 sample sentences. The purpose was to find out the strengths and weaknesses of students while punctuating these sentences.

After the pretest, 5 students who scored below class average score got a treatment that was to practice punctuation marks on Grammarly by learning the rules for each mark as well using Grammarly for one month. This treatment also included how to use Grammarly to check punctuation errors and learn rules for each mark while using Grammarly.

in the posttest, students were asked to punctuate a different set of 20 sample sentences with similar difficulty level and punctuation requirements as the pretest.

### Results

The present study investigated the effectiveness of using Grammarly on improving punctuation skills among intermediate students. A total of 30 students participated in the initial pre-test assessment, which consisted of 20 sample sentences designed to evaluate their understanding and correct usage of punctuation marks. The assessment was evaluated using a modified version of Cohen's rubric, specifically focusing on the punctuation aspect of writing mechanics. The scoring rubric for punctuation evaluation is presented below:



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### Scoring Rubric for Punctuation Evaluation

Score	Level	Indicators
5	Excellent	Mastery of punctuation; all punctuation marks used correctly and appropriately
4	Good	Few errors in punctuation; demonstrates strong control
3	Average	A fair number of errors in punctuation; basic understanding evident
2	Poor	Frequent errors in punctuation; limited control
1	Very Poor	No control over punctuation; consistent and multiple errors

Each student's performance was scored out of 5 points based on their accuracy in using commas, periods, question marks, exclamation marks, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, and quotation marks in the given sentences. The pre-test results revealed varying levels of punctuation proficiency among the 30 students. After analyzing the pre-test scores, five students who scored below the average mark were selected for the intervention phase. These five students were provided access to Grammarly, a digital writing assistant tool, and were instructed to use it consistently for one month while completing their regular writing assignments and exercises. After the one-month intervention period, a post-test was administered to the same five students using a different set of 20 sample sentences with similar difficulty level and punctuation requirements as the pre-test.

The data collected from both pre-test and post-test assessments were analyzed manually using frequency distribution, mean scores, and individual performance comparison. The pre-test results for all 30 students showed a mean score of 3.2 out of 5, indicating that the overall class performance was slightly above average. However, considerable variation was observed in individual scores, with some students demonstrating excellent punctuation skills while others struggled significantly. The frequency distribution of pre-test scores among all 30 students is presented in the table below:

### Frequency Distribution of Pre-Test Scores (N=30)

Score	Frequency	Percentage
5	4	13.3%
4	8	26.7%
3	10	33.3%
2	6	20.0%
1	2	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>



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The table shows that the majority of students scored 3 out of 5, representing average performance in punctuation usage. Only 13.3% of students achieved excellent scores, while 26.7% demonstrated poor to very poor punctuation skills. This distribution clearly indicated that a significant portion of the class needed intervention to improve their punctuation abilities. From this pool, five students who scored below the class average of 3.2 were selected for the Grammarly intervention. These students were identified as Student A, Student B, Student C, Student D, and Student E for the purpose of this analysis.

The individual pretest scores of the five selected students are presented in the following table:

### Individual Pretest Scores of Selected Students

Student	Pre-Test Score	Performance Level
Student A	2	Poor
Student B	2	Poor
Student C	3	Average
Student D	2	Poor
Student E	1	Very Poor
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>Below Average</b>

The mean pre-test score for these five students was 2.0 out of 5, which was considerably lower than the class average of 3.2. Student E showed the most difficulty with punctuation, scoring only 1 point, while Student C performed slightly better with a score of 3. The common errors observed in the pretest included missing commas in compound sentences, incorrect use of apostrophes in possessive forms, absence of necessary periods, misplaced quotation marks, and confusion between colons and semicolons.

Many students also failed to use question marks at the end of interrogative sentences and placed commas incorrectly in complex sentences.

After the one-month intervention period during which these five students used Grammarly regularly for their writing tasks, a post-test was conducted to measure any improvement in their punctuation skills. The post-test consisted of 20 different sample sentences but maintained the same level of difficulty and assessed the same punctuation marks as the pre-test. The results of the post-test demonstrated significant improvement in the punctuation abilities of all five students. The individual post-test scores are presented below:



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Individual Posttest Scores of Selected Students

Student	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Improvement	Performance Level
Student A	2	4	+2	Good
Student B	2	5	+3	Excellent
Student C	3	5	+2	Excellent
Student D	2	4	+2	Good
Student E	1	3	+2	Average
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>+2.2</b>	<b>Good</b>

The data clearly indicates substantial improvement in punctuation skills for all five students following the use of Grammarly. The mean post-test score increased from 2.0 to 4.2, representing an average improvement of 2.2 points or 44% enhancement in performance. Every student showed positive growth, with improvement ranging from 2 to 3 points. Student B demonstrated the most remarkable progress, moving from a poor performance level (score of 2) to excellent performance (score of 5), achieving a perfect or near-perfect score on the post-test. Similarly, Student C also reached the excellent level, improving from an average score of 3 to a score of 5. Student A and Student D both moved from poor performance to good performance, scoring 4 points each on the posttest. Even Student E, who had the weakest punctuation skills initially with a score of 1, showed improvement by moving to an average performance level with a score of 3.

The comparison between pretest and posttest mean scores is illustrated in the following visual representation:

Figure 1

Comparison of Mean Scores



This visual clearly demonstrates the significant upward shift in mean scores from 2.0 to 4.2 following the Grammarly intervention. The improvement of 2.2 points represents a 110% increase in performance, indicating that the intervention was highly effective. The posttest mean of 4.2 is also notably higher than the original class average of 3.2, suggesting that the five selected students not only improved their own skills but also surpassed the average performance level of their peers who did not receive the intervention.

The frequency distribution of posttest scores among the five intervention students further illustrates the positive impact:



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**Table 5 Frequency Distribution of Posttest Scores (N=5)**

Score	Frequency	Percentage
5	2	40%
4	2	40%
3	1	20%
2	0	0%
1	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the posttest, none of the students scored in the poor or very poor categories, whereas in the pretest, four out of five students had scored in these lower categories. The shift toward higher performance levels is evident, with 80% of students achieving good to excellent scores and only 20% remaining at the average level. This distribution pattern starkly contrasts with the pre-test results where 80% of the selected students were performing at poor or very poor levels.

Individual student progress can also be examined to understand the specific improvements made by each participant. Student A initially struggled with comma placement in complex sentences and often omitted periods at the end of declarative sentences. After using Grammarly, Student A's posttest showed correct comma usage in most compound and complex sentences and consistent use of periods. Student B, who had similar issues as Student A, showed even more dramatic improvement, achieving nearly flawless punctuation in the post-test, including correct use of semicolons and colons which were previously problematic. Student C, who had an average pre-test performance, demonstrated mastery-level skills in the post-test, correctly applying all punctuation marks including the more challenging ones such as quotation marks in dialogue and apostrophes in contractions and possessives. Student D improved significantly in using question marks appropriately and in placing commas correctly in introductory phrases and clauses. Student E, despite having the lowest initial score, made commendable progress by learning to use basic punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and question marks more consistently, though some errors still persisted with more complex punctuation scenarios.

The overall analysis of the data reveals several important findings. First, the consistent and regular use of Grammarly over a one-month period led to measurable and substantial improvements in punctuation skills among students who initially performed below average. Second, the improvement was not limited to one or two students but was observed across all five participants in the intervention group, suggesting that the tool has broad applicability and effectiveness. Third, the magnitude of improvement varied among students, with some achieving excellent performance while others reached good or average levels, indicating that while Grammarly is effective, individual learning capacity and engagement also play important roles. Fourth, the fact that all students moved up at least two performance levels demonstrates that even students with very poor initial



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skills can benefit significantly from using digital writing assistance tools.

The data also suggest that Grammarly serves as an effective instructional tool by providing immediate feedback on punctuation errors, which helps students learn correct usage patterns through repeated practice and correction. The real-time suggestions offered by the software appear to have helped students internalize punctuation rules and apply them more accurately in their writing. The improvement observed in this study indicates that integrating technology-based writing tools into the learning process can be a valuable strategy for enhancing specific writing skills such as punctuation usage. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that targeted intervention with appropriate technological support can help struggling students catch up with their peers and even exceed average performance levels within a relatively short period of time. These findings have important implications for educators seeking effective methods to improve student writing mechanics and suggest that Grammarly and similar tools could be incorporated into regular classroom instruction to support students who face challenges with punctuation and other aspects of writing mechanics.

### **Discussion**

Based on the Revised Curriculum 2025, Punctuation is included in the intermediate curriculum and students are expected to be able to punctuate given passages in their end term examination. Since, students find it difficult to understand rules of punctuation, therefore, researcher has used Grammarly as an online learning to help students overcome their punctuation errors.

This research finds that Grammarly proves to be a good AI tool to assist students' in overcoming their punctuation shortcoming. As Grammarly explains to students how to correct mistakes in their punctuation, such as capitalization, comma, and quotation marks etc In this study, the student's scores showed an increase after receiving treatment using Grammarly. The mean of the students' pretest was 3.2 out of 5 showing that students' performance is slightly above average. However, the mean of post-test score of 5

Students after getting treatment increased from 2.0 to 4.2, representing an average improvement of 2.2 points or 44% shows enhancement in performance which got the good category. The results show that there is a significant effect of using Grammarly as a medium for self-editing on the students' writing quality in eleventh grade at Steps College.

This study reveals that Grammarly has facilitated students to do self-editing. This skill developed writing proficiency among students because they can assess their punctuation by themselves without waiting for their teacher's feedback all the time, nor rely on their peer feedback. In other words, this software has enabled teachers to facilitate students' independent learning. Students are given the opportunity to self-assess their writing and edit their writing errors using Grammarly. Roles.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that Grammarly has proven very effective in enhancing punctuation efficiency of students. The Grammarly application is proven to help students quickly check their punctuation errors. The finding of study has also revealed that using Grammarly as a medium for students' self-editing makes it easy for teachers to correct and provide feedback on student punctuation errors. By reviewing their mistakes through Grammarly, it is hoped that students will become





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more aware of their errors and improve their writing skills over time. The findings have important implications for educators seeking effective methods to improve student writing mechanics and suggest that Grammarly and similar tools could be incorporated into regular classroom instruction to support students who face challenges with punctuation and other aspects of writing mechanics.

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