

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF PAPERATER FOR ESSAY WRITING FEEDBACK

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Abstract

This study investigates how EFL students perceive the use of PaperRater as an automated feedback tool in essay writing. Although Grammarly and ChatGPT have received significant attention, PaperRater remains underexplored. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, three Indonesian undergraduate students shared their experiences via interviews and by submitting annotated drafts for analysis. The results show that PaperRater helped them improve grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure by providing quick feedback that encouraged independent revision. However, they also faced several challenges, such as unclear suggestions, occasional inaccuracies, and the tool's inability to address more complex writing aspects like argument development and coherence. Although some students initially found the interface confusing, they gradually became more comfortable using it. Overall, PaperRater was seen as a helpful tool for correcting surface-level errors, but it still needed to be combined with teacher feedback and other tools to support deeper writing improvement. This study emphasizes the importance of using automated tools thoughtfully and in balance with human guidance. Further research with a larger group of participants is recommended to explore long-term effects.

Keywords: *automated feedback; EFL students; essay writing; PaperRater*

1. Introduction

Automated feedback is one of the most significant developments in educational technology, especially in supporting English as Foreign Language (EFL) students in improving their writing skills. It refers to computer-generated suggestions that help students identify and correct errors in their writing instantly. In recent years, tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and ChatGPT have become popular among students because they offer quick, accessible feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. AI-driven feedback tools enhance writing quality by providing immediate support in correcting common language issues (Youn, Salam, & Rahman, 2025).

Despite the popularity of these tools, there are other platforms like PaperRater that also offer automated writing assistance but have not been studied as extensively. PaperRater provides feedback on grammar, spelling, vocabulary usage, and even predicts essay scores. It is free, easy to use, and does not require login, making it an attractive option

for students with limited access to premium tools. However, there is still limited research examining how students engage with PaperRater, interpret its feedback, and whether it contributes meaningfully to their writing development. This study focused on exploring students' experiences with PaperRater, including how they use the tool, how they perceive its effectiveness, and the challenges they face during the revision process.

There are various reasons why this is an important issue to study. First, although research on AI-based writing tools is growing, most studies focus on widely used applications like Grammarly, ChatGPT, and QuillBot (Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023; Fan, N., 2023; Hasim, Alias, & Sauffi, 2024). These studies often overlook less-known tools like PaperRater that are used in real academic settings due to their accessibility. By focusing on PaperRater, this research contributes a fresh perspective to the field of automated writing feedback, especially within the EFL context.

Second, the majority of existing studies rely on quantitative methods, such as test score comparisons or survey responses, to measure the effectiveness of AI tools (Sari, E. & Han, 2024; Yuan, 2023). While such approaches are useful, they do not capture students' personal experiences, emotions, or reasoning behind accepting or rejecting feedback. Students' perceptions influence how they process and apply feedback (Putri, Y. A., 2024; Jaya & Susyla, 2024; Sari, E. & Han, 2024). Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative narrative inquiry method to gain deeper insights into students' thoughts and behaviors when interacting with PaperRater.

Third, although automated tools offer immediate assistance, they are not always effective in providing clear and detailed explanations. Students may find the feedback too general or even confusing, especially when dealing with more complex sentence structures or advanced vocabulary. These limitations can lead to uncertainty and reduce the usefulness of the tool (Fan, N., 2023; Putri, Y. A., 2024). Furthermore, emotional aspects such as confidence and anxiety also influence how students respond to automated feedback, making it important to consider both cognitive and emotional factors (Mohammed & Khalid, 2025).

Fourth, as AI tools become more integrated into classroom practices, it is crucial for both teachers and students to understand how to use them effectively. Teachers are increasingly encouraged to implement digital platforms in writing instruction, but they may lack awareness of how students interpret and use the feedback provided by these tools. Automated feedback is most helpful when students are guided to think critically and reflect on the suggestions they receive (Merkviladze, M., 2024). This research aims to inform educators on how to better support students in using AI tools as part of a process-based writing approach.

In addition, understanding students' perceptions of automated feedback is crucial, as feedback is neither received nor utilized uniformly across learners. While some students may readily accept and apply the suggestions provided, others may choose to verify the feedback by consulting additional tools such as ChatGPT or Grammarly, or they may decide to disregard the feedback entirely. These choices reflect students' critical engagement with technology, demonstrating that they are not merely passive recipients of automated assistance. Investigating these behaviors offers valuable insights for both educators and developers, with the potential to enhance the effectiveness of automated writing support systems.

Accordingly, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students interact with PaperRater: how they utilize the tool, how they interpret and respond

to its feedback, and what challenges they encounter in the process. The findings are intended to inform educators in designing writing activities that meaningfully integrate AI tools, and to guide developers in improving the usability and pedagogical value of such systems based on authentic student experiences.

The research questions that guide this study are as follows, and are intended to explore students' engagement with PaperRater, their perceptions of its feedback, and the obstacles they face when using the tool:

1. How do students use the feedback provided by PaperRater to improve their essay writing skills?
2. What challenges do students face when using PaperRater for essay writing assignments?

2. Literature Review

The integration of Automated Writing Feedback (AWF) tools has become increasingly prominent in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly in academic writing. This literature review presents relevant concepts and research findings that support the use of automated feedback systems such as PaperRater in improving students' writing quality, motivation, and autonomy.

2.1 Concepts of Feedback in Essay Writing

Feedback is an essential part of writing instruction, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. It helps learners recognize their mistakes and revise their work more effectively. Feedback mainly focuses on aspects like grammar, organization, coherence, and vocabulary, all of which are crucial for writing development (Bencharif et al., 2024). Writing feedback can be direct or indirect, and even minimal feedback can help students improve their writing by raising their awareness of errors and encouraging self-correction.

Traditional feedback is usually given by teachers in written or verbal form. However, this process can be time-consuming, especially in large classes. Teachers might not always have enough time to give detailed feedback to each student. This problem leads to delays in revision and reduces the potential impact of feedback on writing improvement (Bencharif et al., 2024). Teacher feedback helps students improve grammar, vocabulary, and structure (Mali & Salsbury, 2021). It supports learner progress and increases confidence in writing. However, since the pandemic, the way feedback is given has shifted from traditional to electronic. Many teachers now use digital platforms like Google Docs or learning management systems to provide feedback asynchronously or synchronously. This change has allowed feedback to become more accessible and time-efficient.

2.2 Concepts of Automated Writing Feedback

Automated Writing Feedback (AWF), also known as Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), refers to systems that use technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing, to provide instant feedback on writing. According to Ebadi & Ajabshir (2023), these tools can identify grammatical errors, check vocabulary use, suggest improvements, and sometimes give holistic ratings. Examples of AWF tools include Grammarly, PaperRater, Quillbot, and Criterion.

According to Merkviladze, M. (2024), these tools are valued for their speed, consistency, and personalization. They help teachers reduce workload and allow students to

revise their writing multiple times based on instant feedback. Teachers also believe that AWF enhances students' autonomy and engagement in writing tasks. Fan, N. (2023) found that using Grammarly as a feedback tool helped learners improve their writing, especially when used alongside teacher feedback. However, the study also noted that AWF systems mostly focus on surface-level issues like grammar and spelling. They may not effectively address deeper writing elements such as content development and argument quality.

Ajabshir & Ebadi (2023) compared AWE with teacher-focused feedback in narrative and argumentative writing. They found that AWE improved lexical diversity and syntactic complexity, while teacher feedback led to better fluency. This suggests that both types of feedback have strengths and could be used together for better results. Mohammed, S. J., & Khalid, M. W. (2025) examined the psychological and emotional effects of AI-generated feedback. The study found that such tools can improve students' motivation, confidence, and writing development. When feedback is instant and non-judgmental, learners feel less anxious and more comfortable experimenting with their writing. Similarly, Bencharif et al. (2024) noted that by handling surface-level errors, AWF allows learners to revise asynchronously and frees teachers to focus on higher-order skills such as content and argumentation. However, AWF tools are not perfect. Fan, N. (2023) reported that students sometimes find the feedback repetitive or difficult to understand, especially at lower proficiency levels. In addition, some tools may overlook contextual errors or misinterpret meaning, leading to inaccurate suggestions.

2.3 Students' Perceptions of Automated Feedback

Understanding how students perceive automated feedback is key to evaluating its usefulness. In a study by Mali & Salsbury (2021) said that most students viewed electronic feedback positively. They appreciated its accessibility, clarity, and usefulness in improving their academic writing. However, some students still preferred traditional feedback due to its personal touch and the ability to ask for clarification.

Fan, N. (2023) used a mixed-method approach to explore students' responses to Grammarly feedback. The study found no significant difference in writing quality between students who received both Grammarly and teacher feedback and those who only received teacher feedback. However, students who received Grammarly feedback showed higher persistence and motivation to revise their work. The qualitative data revealed that while students appreciated the tool's convenience, they also wanted more detailed explanations, especially for complex errors.

Stöhr, C., Ou, A. W., & Malmström, H. (2024) surveyed nearly 6,000 students and found wide use of AI chatbots like ChatGPT in higher education. However, perceptions varied depending on gender and field of study. Humanities students were more cautious and skeptical, while students from technology-related fields were more enthusiastic. These findings show that students' acceptance of AWF tools may depend on their familiarity with technology and their academic background. Insight into the emotional aspects of using AI feedback showed that AI-generated feedback helped reduce students' anxiety and increased their peace of mind when writing in a foreign language (Mohammed, S. J., & Khalid, M. W.,

2025). This aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of emotional state in language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Students benefit most when automated tools are used as part of a process-oriented writing approach, where feedback becomes more meaningful as they are allowed to reflect, revise, and apply suggestions critically (Merkviladze, M., 2024). Therefore, teachers need to guide students in interpreting and applying feedback effectively.

3. Research Method

This section describes the methodology used in conducting this study. It includes the research design, participants, instruments, and data analysis procedures applied to explore students' perceptions of using PaperRater as an automated feedback tool in essay writing.

3.1 Research Design

This research used a qualitative narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry focuses on collecting personal stories, which makes it a good choice for understanding how students actually interact with and feel about using automated feedback tools in their writing (Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023; Mohammed & Khalid, 2025). This method helps to explore students' real experiences, thoughts, and feelings when using PaperRater for essay writing (Yuan, 2023; Putri, Y. A., 2024).

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were three students from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on prior experience with PaperRater. Initially, a questionnaire was distributed to find students who had enough experience using PaperRater. After collecting the responses, the data were carefully reviewed and three students who best matched the criteria were selected, meaning those who had used PaperRater regularly and could share detailed experiences. Narrative inquiry was adopted, as recommended by Creswell (2012), to capture personal stories and experiences.

3.3 Instruments

To collect the data, two research instruments were used in this study: semi-structured interviews and document analysis of students' essay drafts. The semi-structured interviews gave students the freedom to talk openly about their experiences, but still kept the conversation focused on important topics like how they used the feedback, what they found helpful, and what challenges they faced (Fan, N., 2023; Miranty et al., 2023). Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded for accuracy. Additionally, the analysis of students' essay drafts provided direct insight into how the feedback from PaperRater was applied during the revision process (Gombert et al., 2024). This combination of interviews and document analysis made the data richer and more reliable.

3.4 Data Analysis

For data analysis, a narrative analysis approach was used. First, the interview recordings were transcribed word for word. Then, all the data including the interview transcripts and students' essay drafts were read several times to get familiar with the

content. After that, open coding was done by highlighting important parts. The codes were grouped into several key themes, including time efficiency, skill improvement, understanding of grammar rules, clarity of explanations, and challenges encountered in using the tool (Hasim, Alias, & Sauffi, 2024; Sari, E. & Han, 2024). Grouping the data into themes made it easier to see patterns and similarities across the participants' stories, and helped in presenting their experiences in a clear and organized way (Jaya, Susyla, & Bengkulu, 2024).

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, it retold the stories from the participants regarding their experiences with using PaperRater for essay writing assignments. The narratives of each participant, namely Holly, Jasmia, and Scarlett, provide insight into (1) how they use the feedback provided by PaperRater to improve their essay writing, and (2) the challenges they face when using the tool.

4.1 Holly's Story: How She Used the Feedback Provided by PaperRater to Improve Her Essay Writing Skills

Holly was a student from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. According to Holly, her engagement with PaperRater was marked by her consistent use of the feedback it provided. She paid close attention to grammar corrections, sentence structure recommendations, and even writing style suggestions like avoiding passive voice and making sentences shorter and clearer. Over time, Holly noticed that her essays became more organized and grammatically sound. She appreciated how the feedback was immediate and specific, which helped her revise independently without waiting for a teacher's review.

Holly explained:

"Overall, it's quite effective. Because, in addition to helping to detect mistakes in the essay, article, or whatever, the PaperRater also gives us feedback that makes us know where our mistakes are... Over time, because we've been quite trained in this PaperRater, we can correct our own mistakes without having to rely on existing tools." (Holly, line 27-35)

This showed how Holly became more aware of her writing and started to understand what needed to be improved. She mentioned things like using too much passive voice or writing long sentences. These were common problems for many students, but because of the feedback she received, Holly learned to fix them. Over time, she gradually internalized feedback, developing the ability to independently identify and correct errors. This meant she became more confident and independent as a writer.

This finding was consistent with the results Fan, N. (2023) found, that EFL students who used automated feedback tools often wrote better, especially with grammar and clarity. Similarly, Ajabshir and Ebadi (2023) concluded that automated writing evaluation tools could enhance students' control over language accuracy and fluency when they actively engaged with the feedback. Holly's experience was a good example of how helpful automated tools like PaperRater could be when students genuinely engaged with them.

4.2 The Challenges Faced by Holly When Using PaperRater for Essay Writing Assignments

Despite her positive experience, Holly also faced some challenges. One of the main challenges was that some of the feedback felt too vague. For example, PaperRater sometimes highlighted a sentence and said it was wordy or awkward but didn't explain why or give suggestions to fix it. This made her feel confused and unsure about how to improve it. There were also times when the tool marked correct grammar as wrong, which made her question her own understanding.

"Actually, it's easy to understand. But, if it can give more in-depth feedback, it's better. Because it reminds us that our grammar still needs improvement. So, of course, a more in-depth explanation will be very helpful." (Holly, line 63-66)

This showed that although the tool was generally clear, Holly still hoped for more detailed explanations. It highlighted a key limitation of automated feedback, including lack of depth and guidance for understanding and applying corrections. This also supported Gombert et al. (2024), who pointed out that automated tools often struggle to provide deep insights needed for complex revisions.

Holly also mentioned that she trusted the tool more for grammar and spelling, but when it came to sentence structure, she had to think more carefully. She preferred to decide for herself whether the structure made sense based on what she wanted to express.

"Usually, I prefer grammar and spelling. Because it's easier to apply. But, if it's about structure of sentences, I usually need to consider it more. Because I need to make sure that the feedback is in line with what I want to convey. So, if it's about structure of sentences, I usually use it for personal judgment." (Holly, line 69-75)

This meant she didn't always follow the structure suggestions from PaperRater because sometimes they didn't match what she wanted to say. It showed that while the tool was helpful, it couldn't always understand the meaning behind her sentences.

Additionally, Holly sometimes double-checked the feedback using other AI tools. She would compare PaperRater's suggestions with results from tools like ChatGPT to decide which one made more sense.

"When I receive feedback from the PaperRater, I usually look for it in ChatGPT or other AI tools. When I receive feedback from all of them, I usually compare which one makes more sense to be used." (Holly, line 79-82)

This showed that Holly thought carefully about the feedback and made her own choices instead of fully relying on just one source. However, it also showed that she felt unsure about trusting only one tool, especially when the suggestions from different platforms didn't always match.

Another challenge Holly faced was how PaperRater changed her sentences. Since she often thought in her first language before writing, the tool sometimes made her sentences sound awkward or too complicated in English.

"Because sometimes it's hard to identify certain sentences. Especially when I'm writing an essay in my own language." (Holly, line 86-88)

"I didn't use all of the PaperRater. If the PaperRater changes to a difficult sentence, it makes the sentence weird. So, I have to think about it carefully." (Holly, line 93-95)

This showed that PaperRater sometimes made her sentences more complicated, which didn't always help. It also shows that the tool couldn't always understand her original message, especially when her ideas were translated from her own languages.

Holly's experience reflected the same findings as Gombert et al. (2024). PaperRater is helpful for fixing basic writing problems like grammar and spelling mistakes. But it didn't really help with bigger things, like organizing ideas or improving content. Holly's story showed that while PaperRater could be useful, it worked best when used alongside feedback from a teacher. Tools like this could improve writing, but they couldn't fully replace the help and advice that comes from a real person.

4.3 Jasmia's Story: How She Used the Feedback Provided by PaperRater to Improve Her Essay Writing Skills

Jasmia was a student from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. According to Jasmia, she started using PaperRater with a strong desire to improve her academic writing. At first, she was curious but also a bit unsure about how to make the best use of the feedback. Some of the suggestions, especially those about grammar and word choice, were confusing for her in the beginning. But instead of giving up, she chose to learn from the experience. She compared the feedback with what she already knew and even looked for more information when something did not make sense.

As she used the tool more, Jasmia became more thoughtful in how she responded to the suggestions. She found that while PaperRater gave helpful feedback, such as pointing out unclear sentences or complicated wording, not everything it suggested matched what she really wanted to say. So, she started thinking more critically and only accepted the suggestions that truly improved her writing.

"So, after I finish writing the essay, before I put it together or write it in a book like yesterday, I have to check how much my essay will get. So, I use a PaperRater to copy my essay" (Jasmia, line 151-153)

"The first thing I see is not the feedback, but my overall score.... And most of the time, I don't get B. I often get C. From there, if I see C, it means it's bad. It needs to be revised." (Jasmia, line 157-160)

These quotes showed how Jasmia used the score feature in PaperRater to decide whether her essay needed improvement. For her, receiving a "C" meant the writing needed to be improved. She didn't stop at checking the score, she went back, reviewed the feedback on grammar or sentence structure, and revised her work before finalizing it. This process helped her build a habit of revising and improving her writing.

Over time, she developed a helpful routine. She wrote her drafts first without using the tool, then used PaperRater at the end to check the overall score, fix grammar and

sentence flow. This way, she kept her own suggestions in the writing but still benefited from the PaperRater's feedback.

Her story supported the findings of Miranty et al. (2023), who found that Indonesian EFL students became more accurate and aware of their writing with the help of automated feedback. It also matches what Sari, E. and Han (2024) reported, that tools like PaperRater can help students feel more confident about their writing over time.

4.4 The Challenges Faced by Jasmia When Using PaperRater for Essay Writing Assignments

One of the main challenges Jasmia faced when using PaperRater was understanding and interpreting the feedback. At first, she often felt confused by some of the suggestions, especially those related to grammar and vocabulary. Sometimes the feedback didn't make sense or didn't really match the actual problems in her writing, which made it hard for her to know what to fix.

"I've been ignoring her feedback about my vocabulary." (Jasmia, line 217-218)

"Because I've written as much as I can according to my ability. But suddenly, when I submitted it to PaperRater, the score of my vocabulary was bad." (Jasmia, line 220-222)

This made her question the accuracy and fairness of the scoring system. She felt frustrated because she believed she had done her best, but the low score made her doubt her vocabulary skills. She also realized that some suggestions didn't match her personal writing style or the message she wanted to express. This challenge was consistent with findings by Miranty et al. (2023), who noted that many EFL students struggled with automated feedback that didn't align with their writing intentions or skill levels.

"And it was hard to find the button for the grammar check." (Jasmia, line 245-246)

"It makes the user confused. Yes. It's hard to find the grammar check, the plagiarism, and where to submit the text. That's it. That's the problem. It makes the user confused. That was my challenge. So, in the past, when I opened the website, to overcome the challenge, I opened the website, scrolled down a bit, and pressed the big button for the grammar check. The left one. The very left one. That's it. So, I won't get lost on the website." (Jasmia, line 251-258)

This showed that the design of the website was not user-friendly. For Jasmia, it wasn't just about writing essays, but also about being able to access the tools that were supposed to help her improve. To deal with this, she created her own way of using the website, like scrolling down and clicking the big button on the far left to check grammar. This helped her avoid confusion each time she used it. Her story supported the findings of Hasim et al. (2024), who found that if a feedback tool was hard to understand or navigate, students were less likely to use it effectively.

4.5 Scarlett's Story: How She Used the Feedback Provided by PaperRater to Improve Her Essay Writing Skills

Scarlett was a student from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. According to Scarlett, she used PaperRater with a clear purpose. She saw it as a tool to improve her drafts, not to change the main ideas in her writing. Her writing process was well-organized, she would write the full essay, review it on her own, and then use PaperRater to check grammar, vocabulary, and writing style. She liked how the feedback was divided into different categories, which helped her focus on one part of her writing at a time.

"It's quite effective because PaperRater shows or helps to underline words or sentences that are wrong, as well as showing the improvement of the sentence." (Scarlett, line 364-366)

This showed that Scarlett found PaperRater useful because it didn't just say what was wrong, it also gave ideas on how to fix the problem. She learned to notice common grammar issues and how to write better sentences. Her experience supports what Fan, N. (2023) found, which was that automated feedback didn't just fix grammar, but also helped students become more aware of grammar patterns and writing rules over time.

"I think a PaperRater is quite helpful because a PaperRater sometimes offers a variety of vocabulary, and the vocabulary is academic-based." (Scarlett, line 372-374)

This showed that Scarlett appreciated how PaperRater sometimes suggested more academic-sounding words. It helped her make her writing sound more formal and suitable for essay writing assignments. This connected with the study by Ajabshir and Ebadi (2023), who said that automated tools could help students use better vocabulary in different types of writing.

4.6 The Challenges Faced by Scarlett When Using PaperRater for Essay Writing Assignments

While Scarlett found PaperRater helpful, she didn't rely on it completely. There were times when the suggestions didn't seem relevant or clear, especially when the tool highlighted mistakes without giving proper explanations.

"Usually, PaperRater underlines or explains the wrong words. But when I write, the explanation that appears is without clarification. So, it's a kind of error. So, there's no clarification." (Scarlett, line 389-392)

This showed that while PaperRater was designed to highlight language errors, it sometimes failed to provide clear explanations for the corrections. As a result, users like Scarlett may feel confused or unsure about how to respond to the feedback. This lack of clarity can reduce the tool's effectiveness, especially for students who relied on feedback to improve their writing. It also highlighted the importance of combining automated feedback with other tools to ensure better understanding and learning, as supported by Fan, N. (2023) and Gombert et al. (2024).

"I handle it by using other tools such as QuillBot or Grammarly, and then I pay attention to the points that have been marked as wrong, whether the correction is the same or different." (Scarlett, line 397-400)

This showed that Scarlett actively compared feedback from multiple tools to better understand her mistakes and improve her writing. It reflected her critical thinking and willingness to cross-check suggestions rather than depending on just one tool. This behavior also highlighted a common strategy among EFL students who feel that automated feedback like that from PaperRater was not always accurate or clear enough on its own. As noted by Fan, N. (2023), students often use additional support systems to interpret and refine automated suggestions for more effective learning.

In the end, Scarlett believed that human feedback was still necessary. She saw PaperRater as a useful tool for checking surface-level issues and getting a final score, but she didn't treat it as the final authority. For her, the biggest challenge was learning when to trust the tool and when to use her own judgment or ask for help from other sources.

The results of this study show that students used PaperRater in thoughtful and strategic ways to improve their writing. Most participants relied on the tool to correct grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. They appreciated the instant feedback that helped them revise their essays more quickly and independently. For example, Holly and Scarlett shared that using PaperRater regularly helped them notice common problems in their writing, such as using too much passive voice or writing sentences that were too long. They felt that PaperRater trained them to notice their own mistakes over time, which helped them become more confident and self-reliant in writing. Jasmia also mentioned that the score provided by the tool motivated her to revise and improve her drafts, which shows how automated scoring can influence writing behavior. These experiences reflect how automated feedback can encourage process-based writing and revision (Fan, N., 2023; Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023).

However, the students did not simply accept all suggestions from PaperRater. They often evaluated the feedback critically and made decisions based on their own judgment. When the tool's suggestions seemed unclear or not in line with what they wanted to express, the students would cross-check the feedback using other platforms such as Grammarly, QuillBot, or ChatGPT. This shows that the students developed a reflective approach to writing, combining the strengths of multiple tools to achieve better results. In this way, PaperRater did not just help correct surface-level errors, but also encouraged students to take more control of their own writing process. This supports Merkviladze's (2024) idea that students should be encouraged to think carefully about the feedback they receive instead of just following it without question.

Even though PaperRater was helpful, it also had some challenges. One big problem was that the feedback was not always clear. Students often got comments like "awkward sentences" or "wordy expressions" without any explanation of what was wrong or how to fix it. This made it hard for them to learn and improve, especially when the mistake wasn't obvious. Sometimes, the tool also marked correct grammar as incorrect, which confused the students and made some of them question their own understanding. These problems support what Gombert et al. (2024) said, that automated tools often don't go deep enough to help students improve more complex parts of their writing.

In addition, the PaperRater website was not always easy to use. Jasmia shared that she initially struggled to find the grammar check and submission features on the website. This kind of problem can make students feel confused and less likely to use the tool properly, showing that how easy a tool is to use really matters. In addition, some students faced emotional challenges. They felt frustrated when their vocabulary scores were low even though they had tried hard, and sometimes they felt confused or disappointed when the feedback didn't match what they were trying to say. These feelings affected their confidence and made them less motivated to revise their writing. This supports what Mohammed and Khalid (2025) said about how emotions can play a big role when students use AI tools to learn a language.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that automated feedback tools like PaperRater can support EFL students in developing writing habits that promote self-revision and independent learning. However, this study has two main limitations. First, the number of participants was limited to three students. Future studies should increase participant diversity and sample size to enhance the generalizability of findings. Second, the use of narrative inquiry means that the data is rich but specific to individuals. Future researchers may use other methods such as experimental or mixed-method designs to explore the broader impact of automated feedback on writing performance. Further research could also investigate the long-term effects of using tools like PaperRater and compare it with other feedback sources, thus providing deeper insight into how technology supports EFL students in academic writing.

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