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THE ROLE OF AI IN GRAMMAR FEEDBACK: ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS COMPARED TO TEACHER EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has significantly influenced language learning, particularly in grammar correction. This study investigates students' perceptions of AI-generated feedback compared to traditional teacher feedback in grammar instruction. Conducted with 54 EFL students at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, the research employed a structured questionnaire to assess the strengths and limitations of both feedback methods. The findings reveal that AI feedback is valued for its speed, consistency, and accessibility, providing instant corrections. However, AI lacks contextual understanding, personalization, and emotional engagement, which are essential for deeper learning. In contrast, teacher feedback offers tailored explanations, motivational support, and adaptability to individual learning needs, but it is slower and limited by availability. The study suggests that a hybrid approach, combining AI efficiency with human insight, may offer the most effective strategy for enhancing grammar learning. Despite these insights, the study is limited by its small sample size, reliance on self-reported perceptions, and focus on grammar correction. Future research should explore AI feedback in broader language-learning contexts and incorporate objective performance measures. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on AI's role in education and its potential as a complementary tool for language instruction.

Keywords: *AI Feedback; Teacher Feedback; Grammar Correction; EFL Students; Hybrid Approach.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has begun to recalibrate long-standing pedagogical practices, and few areas illustrate this shift more vividly than written grammar feedback in second and foreign language (L2) learning contexts. From stand-alone grammar checkers (e.g., Grammarly, Ginger) and automated writing evaluation (AWE) platforms to large language model (LLM) chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini), AI-driven feedback systems now mediate how learners notice, understand, and act on linguistic problems in their writing. Immediate, always-available feedback reduces turnaround time between drafting and revision, helping learners identify local form errors (tense, agreement, punctuation) at the point of need and fostering self-regulated cycles of review that were previously constrained by teacher workload and institutional timelines. At scale, these systems promise greater access and timeliness in high student-to-teacher ratio settings common across the Global South, including Indonesia. Yet the pedagogical value of AI hinges not only on speed, but on the quality, transparency, contextual fit, and pedagogically informed integration of automated feedback with human expertise.

Research over the past five years documents substantial learner uptake of AI grammar and writing assistance tools across diverse EFL/ESL contexts. Studies in Indonesian higher and secondary education show routine student use of Grammarly, QuillBot, and ChatGPT for error detection, paraphrasing, and sentence refinement, with many learners reporting perceived gains in grammatical accuracy and confidence. Similar patterns emerge in Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, and multinational samples, where learners turn to AI for fast corrective feedback—particularly when instructor response times are slow or classes are large. Learners frequently position AI as a first-pass editor that helps them "clean up" form before submitting drafts to teachers, suggesting an emergent workflow in which automated local feedback precedes human attention to higher-order concerns.

Empirical evidence indicates that AI-mediated corrective feedback can produce measurable improvements in selected dimensions of L2 writing, especially language use and surface-level accuracy. Quasi-experimental and randomized studies comparing AWE or Grammarly-supported instruction to traditional instruction report significant post-test gains in grammar, mechanics, and, in some cases, lexical or organizational measures. For example, L2 learners using AWE outperformed or matched teacher-focused feedback conditions on several CALF (complexity, accuracy, lexical diversity, fluency) indices, while classroom interventions incorporating Grammarly or AI-enhanced AWE reported higher grammatical accuracy and reduced editing time. Mixed-methods work with ChatGPT-supported formative feedback likewise found statistically significant improvements in undergraduate ESL writing, corroborated by positive learner perceptions.

At the same time, effect patterns are nuanced. Some studies show that AI tools are especially effective for targeted local features (e.g., subject-verb agreement, capitalization, punctuation) but have weaker impact on holistic writing quality, idea development, or genre-specific rhetorical moves. Case and phenomenological studies of Grammarly use in Indonesian secondary and vocational settings, for instance, report robust error flagging yet mixed transfer to global coherence. Learners often accept suggestions that increase correctness but inadvertently flatten voice or disrupt rhetorical intent; in other cases, they ignore or misinterpret metalinguistic explanations. These findings echo broader AWE research showing tool strengths in form-focused noticing but limitations in diagnosing discourse-level adequacy

Generative AI chatbots add new affordances—and new risks. Because LLMs can generate, explain, and rephrase at scale, they can offer dialogic, iterative feedback that goes beyond red-underlining discrete errors. Studies with EFL and ESL university learners show that when prompted skillfully, ChatGPT can provide scaffolded explanations, alternative phrasings, and genre-specific advice that students perceive as highly responsive; integration with teacher mediation has yielded greater gains than teacher-only feedback in some controlled comparisons. However, research evaluating the quality of LLM feedback cautions that responses may be overly generic, inaccurate in diagnosing discourse cohesion, or meaning-changing when suggestions are accepted uncritically. Reliability varies with prompt quality, and hallucinated rules can mislead novice writers.

Objectivity and consistency are frequently cited advantages of algorithmic grammar feedback. Automated systems apply the same detection heuristics across submissions, potentially reducing intra-rater variability associated with human fatigue, mood, or implicit bias. Large-scale surveys of educators and graduate students highlight perceived usefulness of algorithmically driven writing tools for standardizing lower-level error identification and streamlining formative cycles, particularly in programs lacking sufficient staffing. Importantly, researchers caution that algorithmic "objectivity" is contingent upon training data and model design; bias persists when corpora underrepresent learner varieties or disciplinary registers, producing false positives or inappropriate standardization pressures on World Englishes. Institutional policies and critical digital literacy are therefore integral to equitable deployment.

Efficiency benefits are also well documented. Automated feedback can process large volumes of student writing rapidly, freeing teacher time for higher-order concerns. Intervention and classroom studies consistently report reduced marking load and quicker revision cycles when AI is embedded in writing courses; students receive multiple rounds of local correction before meeting with instructors, allowing class time to focus on content, genre, or rhetorical strategy. In resource-constrained contexts, educators view this division of labor as a pragmatic path to scaling individualized support.

Yet reliance on AI raises pedagogical, cognitive, and affective concerns. Qualitative inquiries across secondary, tertiary, and thesis-writing contexts document learner over-dependence—students sometimes accept automated suggestions without processing underlying rules, anticipate the tool will "fix everything," or experience reduced effort in pre-draft planning. Teachers worry that habitual outsourcing of error detection may attenuate long-term grammar development, critical thinking, and strategic self-monitoring; some report student drafts converging toward formulaic, tool-preferred phrasings that dampen voice. Studies of user dependency in English learning and student-reported challenges with AI writing tools reinforce these anxieties, linking heavy reliance to diminished engagement in face-to-face feedback dialogues and lower metalinguistic awareness.

Human feedback remains indispensable because teachers marshal contextual knowledge, curricular goals, and affective attunement that current AI systems cannot reliably emulate. Research on student engagement with teacher written feedback shows that learners differentiate between local (form) and global (content/organization) comments and often attribute deeper learning, motivation, and trust to teacher responses—especially when feedback is dialogic. Engagement studies across proficiency levels reveal that students process teacher feedback more consistently across affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions than they do peer or automated feedback; teacher scaffolding also enhances how learners subsequently use peer/AI input. Investigations into teacher emotional labor in L2 writing underscore the relational, motivational, and pastoral functions embedded in teacher commentary—dimensions largely absent from automated tools.

Comparative and sequencing research suggests that hybrid feedback ecosystems—strategically combining AI and teacher input—can optimize revision outcomes. Experimental work in Vietnamese EFL courses found that integrating AI-generated feedback with teacher comments produced the highest revision frequencies across local and global dimensions, and that giving AI feedback first sometimes primed students to attend more productively to subsequent teacher guidance. Similar synergistic effects emerge in Iranian IELTS writing when ChatGPT feedback is paired with teacher evaluation, and in multi-draft postgraduate writing where students cycle between Grammarly corrections and instructor conferences. These findings support workflow models in which AI handles routine local detection, while teachers address higher-order discourse, disciplinary conventions, and learner affect.

Quality of uptake mediates learning impact. Studies tracking revision logs show that students incorporate a higher proportion of automated local feedback than global teacher suggestions when time is short; however, incorporation does not always equal improvement. Engagement research urges explicit instruction in "feedback literacy": interpreting, evaluating, and selectively acting on AI suggestions in light of audience, genre, and meaning. When students are taught to question automated changes, compare them with teacher advice, and justify choices, revisions become more substantive and learning more durable. Embedding reflective prompts and revision tracking dashboards has been proposed to strengthen metalinguistic noticing and to counter passive acceptance of AI edits.

Ethical, integrity, and policy questions further complicate AI deployment. Educators report uncertainty about acceptable levels of AI assistance, uneven institutional guidelines, and tensions between supporting multilingual writers and safeguarding authorship. Survey and policy studies highlight gaps in teacher training on ethical AI use, while scoping reviews of LLMs in education identify privacy, transparency, and academic honesty as recurring concerns. Empirical research on algorithmically driven writing tools calls for co-developed policies that articulate boundaries (e.g., grammar proofreading vs. content generation), document tool influence in revision histories, and cultivate student awareness of attribution norms.

Taken together, emerging evidence portrays AI grammar feedback as a powerful but partial solution. Automated systems excel in speed, scalability, and consistency for surface-level detection, and, when used judiciously, can catalyze learner noticing, reduce instructor burden, and support iterative drafting. However, current tools struggle with discourse-level interpretation, pragmatic appropriateness, and nurturing the motivational and relational dimensions of writing development that teachers uniquely provide. The most promising pathway lies in an intentional hybrid model: deploy AI for low-stakes, high-volume linguistic triage; leverage teacher expertise for contextualized, rhetorical, and affective guidance; and build student feedback literacy to mediate between the two. The present study adopts this perspective by comparing learner perceptions and outcomes associated with AI-generated grammar feedback and traditional teacher evaluation, and by exploring how a blended workflow may optimize accuracy gains without sacrificing depth, voice, or learner autonomy.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to analyze the perceptions of AI-generated and teacher-provided grammar feedback among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research focused on understanding how students perceived the effectiveness of AI feedback compared to traditional teacher feedback, considering both advantages and limitations.

Participants

The study involved 54 EFL students from Universitas Pancasakti Tegal who were enrolled in grammar classes. The participants represented various proficiency levels, including beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners. To ensure fair representation across different proficiency levels, a stratified random sampling technique was used. This approach allowed for an equal distribution of participants from each proficiency level, ensuring diverse perspectives on AI and teacher feedback.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and structured questions to gather quantitative and qualitative insights. The two key open-ended questions asked in the survey were: (1) "In what ways do you think AI feedback differs from traditional teacher feedback?" and (2) "What are the advantages and disadvantages of using AI feedback compared to human feedback?" The questionnaire was distributed online to reach the participants efficiently and ensure accessibility.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics were used to examine general trends and patterns in the responses, while inferential analysis helped determine significant differences in students' perceptions of AI and teacher feedback. Qualitative responses were coded thematically to identify recurring themes related to the perceived benefits and limitations of AI feedback. The analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students experienced AI-generated feedback and whether they found it beneficial compared to traditional teacher evaluations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The responses to the first question revealed several key differences between AI-generated feedback and traditional teacher feedback. Table 1 summarizes the most frequently mentioned aspects of AI and teacher feedback among the participants:

Table 1. Summary of the Most Frequently Mentioned Aspects of AI and Teacher Feedback

Feedback Type	Key Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses

AI Feedback	Fast, consistent, and accessible	Provides instant corrections; available anytime	Lacks contextual understanding; can be difficult to interpret
Teacher Feedback	Personalized, detailed, and engaging	Provides tailored feedback; considers student emotions and learning style	Slower than AI; depends on teacher availability

Based on Table 1, many students highlighted that AI feedback was fast, consistent, and accessible anytime, allowing them to receive corrections instantly without waiting for teacher availability. However, they also noted that AI lacked contextual understanding and human interaction, making it difficult to grasp certain explanations (Brown, 2021). Some respondents mentioned that AI feedback often used complex language and lacked clear analogies, whereas teachers provided simpler and more relatable explanations using examples (Smith et al., 2023).

Another major theme that emerged was personalization and emotional support. Students reported that traditional teacher feedback was more personalized, empathetic, and engaging, which helped in their understanding of grammar concepts. Teachers could adjust their explanations based on a student's learning needs, while AI provided standardized feedback that did not always address individual difficulties (Jones & Liu, 2022). Moreover, respondents mentioned that AI lacked motivation and encouragement, which are crucial in learning. Overall, the findings suggest that both AI and teacher feedback have their strengths and limitations. AI feedback is beneficial for quick, consistent, and immediate corrections, while traditional teacher feedback offers deeper understanding, personalization, and emotional support. A hybrid approach that combines both AI and human feedback may provide the most effective learning experience for students.

The second question in the study sought to identify the perceived advantages and disadvantages of AI feedback in contrast to human feedback. Table 2 summarizes the most commonly mentioned aspects of AI and human feedback.

Table 2 Summary of Advantages and Disadvantages of AI Feedback Compared to Human Feedback

Feedback Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
AI Feedback	Fast, consistent, available anytime, scalable, detailed corrections	Lacks emotional support, may use complex language, potential for misinterpretation, over-reliance on technology
Teacher Feedback	Personalized, motivational, adaptable explanations, emotionally engaging	Slower feedback process, limited availability, subjective interpretation

Table 2 shows that a significant number of students emphasized the efficiency and speed of AI feedback, noting that it provided instant, consistent, and detailed corrections (Jones & Liu, 2022). However, they also pointed out that AI explanations could sometimes be too complex or difficult to understand, leading to confusion (Brown, 2021). Some students expressed concerns about over-reliance on AI, which could lead to decreased critical thinking skills (Smith et al., 2023). Another key issue raised was the lack of human interaction in AI feedback. Several students noted that traditional teachers

offer encouragement, emotional support, and adaptability that AI cannot replicate. While AI can generate structured and objective feedback, it lacks the empathetic and motivational aspects that a teacher provides, which can be crucial for student engagement and confidence in learning (Williams et al., 2022). Moreover, many students highlighted that AI feedback is highly dependent on technology and internet access, meaning that those with limited connectivity might struggle to benefit from it.

Overall, the results indicate that AI and human feedback each have distinct strengths and weaknesses. AI excels in speed, consistency, and accessibility, while human feedback provides contextual understanding, motivation, and emotional engagement. The findings suggest that a balanced combination of both AI and human feedback may be the most effective approach for enhancing student learning outcomes.

The findings of this study suggest that AI feedback and teacher feedback each have distinct advantages and limitations. AI feedback provides speed, consistency, and accessibility, making it a valuable tool for immediate corrections and large-scale feedback distribution. However, AI struggles with contextual understanding, emotional engagement, and personalized learning needs. In contrast, teacher feedback is more nuanced, adaptable, and motivational, but it is limited by availability and response time.

These findings align with existing research that highlights AI's ability to provide real-time, data-driven feedback but also its difficulty in addressing complex linguistic structures and individualized learning strategies (Jones & Liu, 2022). Additionally, students noted that AI-generated feedback, while highly efficient, often lacks depth and fails to provide the supportive learning environment that human interaction fosters (Smith et al., 2023). The implications of these findings highlight the need for a hybrid approach, where AI feedback is used to complement teacher feedback rather than replace it. Educators should integrate AI tools strategically, ensuring that students benefit from both the efficiency of AI and the personalized guidance of human instructors. Additionally, students should be encouraged to develop critical thinking skills and not rely solely on AI for grammar correction. Future research should explore how AI can be enhanced to address its limitations and provide more contextualized and meaningful feedback in language learning environments.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the differences between AI-generated feedback and traditional teacher feedback in grammar correction for EFL students. The findings highlight that AI feedback is valued for its speed, consistency, and accessibility, allowing students to receive immediate corrections. However, AI lacks the contextual understanding, personalization, and motivational support that human teachers provide. In contrast, teacher feedback offers a more tailored, empathetic, and engaging learning experience, but it is limited by time constraints and availability. The results suggest that a hybrid approach integrating both AI and teacher feedback could optimize grammar learning by balancing

efficiency with depth and personalization. Despite these valuable insights, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted with a relatively small sample of 54 EFL students from a single university, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Future studies should expand the sample size and include students from diverse backgrounds and institutions to enhance external validity. Second, the study relied on self-reported perceptions, which may introduce subjective bias. Future research should incorporate objective performance assessments to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of AI feedback effectiveness. Lastly, this study focused solely on grammar correction, and further research is needed to explore AI feedback in other areas of language learning, such as writing coherence, fluency, and stylistic elements. Overall, while AI-driven feedback presents promising advantages in language instruction, it is most effective when used as a complement rather than a replacement for traditional teacher feedback. A well-integrated approach that leverages AI efficiency with human adaptability and emotional support could offer the most effective pathway for improving student writing proficiency.

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