

Investigating Efl Students` Writing Practices Through Grammarly - Supported Learning

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Abstract: Using a descriptive qualitative design, this study involved six EFL students who had experience using Grammarly in their English writing activities. The study aimed to examine how Grammarly is integrated into students' writing practices and to identify the aspects of writing supported by the application. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, documentation, and screenshots comparing students' writing before and after revision using Grammarly. The data were analyzed through data reduction, conclusion drawing, and verification. The findings revealed that Grammarly supported students in reflective learning by assisting them in reviewing, revising, and evaluating their writing. The application provided immediate feedback that enhanced students' engagement and metacognitive awareness, while encouraging them to critically evaluate suggestions before applying revisions. Grammarly supported several aspects of writing, including grammatical accuracy, consistency in tense usage, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, vocabulary choice, writing clarity, and overall writing quality. These improvements contributed to more accurate, coherent, and readable texts. Students also reported increased confidence and greater independence in completing writing tasks. However, participants emphasized that Grammarly could not replace lecturers' feedback, particularly in understanding contextual meaning and supporting idea development. Overall, Grammarly functioned as a learning companion that encouraged EFL students to engage in more critical, process-oriented, and autonomous writing practices. These findings suggest that integrating Grammarly into English writing instruction can enhance grammatical accuracy, self-editing skills, and writing confidence while enabling teachers to provide more effective feedback and foster learner autonomy in the writing process.

Keywords: Grammarly, EFL students, writing practices, grammarly-supported learning, autonomous learning.

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Introduction

Writing is one of the most important productive skills in English language learning, enabling EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to convey messages, ideas, and information through writing (Fodil-Cherif, 2021). To effectively convey messages, ideas, and information, high-quality writing is essential, which requires writing practice. Through writing practice, students are not only encouraged to express their ideas but also to organize their thoughts and present information in a structured manner (Tung, 2026). Writing remains a challenging skill for many EFL students because producing high-quality texts requires them to manage multiple linguistic aspects, including grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and clarity. These challenges highlight the need for effective instructional support that can assist students throughout the writing process (Lötscher et al., 2025).

In recent decades, the education sector has undergone significant transformation as a result of the rapid development of digital devices, artificial intelligence (AI), and internet technology, which have significantly influenced English language teaching and learning practices (Hamdani, 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Now there are technology-based writing tools for EFL students. Grammarly is an

Automatic Writing Evaluation (AWE) product, a computer-based writing assessment system that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to identify and explain writing errors (Setiawan & Alkhowarizmi, 2025). Grammarly is widely used across various sectors of education to help EFL students with their writing.

Previous studies have consistently reported the positive contribution of Grammarly to EFL students' writing development. Hidayat and Sari (2025) found that Grammarly significantly improved students' writing accuracy by helping them identify and correct grammatical, spelling, and sentence structure errors. Similarly, (Hidayat & Sari, 2025) reported that EFL students perceived Grammarly positively and considered it a useful tool for improving writing quality while promoting independent learning. (Raihan et al., 2023) further revealed that Grammarly supports grammar, punctuation, vocabulary choice, revision, and self-editing, enhances writing accuracy and confidence, and encourages learner autonomy, although lecturers' feedback remains essential for interpreting contextual meaning and developing ideas. Likewise, (Armanda et al., 2022) highlighted Grammarly's role in facilitating the revision process through immediate feedback. Collectively, these studies demonstrate Grammarly's effectiveness in supporting EFL writing; however, they primarily focus on writing outcomes and students' perceptions, leaving limited attention to students' actual writing practices and engagement throughout the Grammarly-assisted writing process.

Previous studies consistently indicate that Grammarly is a valuable tool for supporting EFL students' writing development. The findings demonstrate that Grammarly improves writing accuracy, facilitates revision and self-editing, enhances grammatical and lexical quality, and increases students' confidence and learner autonomy. In addition, students generally hold positive perceptions of its use in writing classes and consider it beneficial for improving the quality of their written work. However, despite these positive findings, most previous studies have primarily examined Grammarly's effectiveness and students' perceptions rather than exploring how students actually engage in Grammarly-assisted writing practices throughout the writing process.

Overall, previous studies indicate that Grammarly positively contributes to the development of writing skills among EFL students. Studies conducted by Hidayat and Sari (2025), Hakiki (2021), Raihan et al. (2023), and Armanda et al. (2022) mostly focused on measuring Grammarly's effectiveness, students' perceptions, and its impact on writing outcomes or performance. However, attention to how EFL students actually engage in writing practices in Grammarly-supported learning environments remains very limited. Specifically, only a few studies have explored students' processes, strategies, habits, and experiences when using Grammarly during the writing process. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring EFL students' writing practices through Grammarly-supported learning. This study aims to investigate how Grammarly is involvement into EFL students' writing practices and which aspects of writing Grammarly supports in EFL students' writing practices.

Consequently, this study is expected to help students understand how to use Grammarly as a learning tool rather than just a correction tool. It can also increase students' awareness of the writing process and encourage them to become more independent writers. The results of this study can be used as a guide for teachers who want to incorporate Grammarly into their writing instruction. Teachers can use these results to create writing activities that encourage active revision and learning from feedback. Research related to technology-assisted writing instruction, the use of artificial intelligence in education, and the development of EFL students' writing skills can be used as reference sources for this study.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a type of research that uses participant observation or case study techniques to produce narrative reports (Lim, 2025). Qualitative research is used by researchers to investigate new phenomena in writing. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the real-life experiences of EFL students when using

Grammarly in their writing practice. Qualitative research typically collects data through interviews, observation, and documentation (Chand, 2025). The researcher chose this method to analyze, describe, and interpret the situations, problems, and phenomena being studied. The researcher serves as the primary instrument in qualitative research by interacting with participants, understanding their responses, and deriving meaning from the information obtained; the researcher directly collects the data.

The data collection methods used in this qualitative study are observation, interviews, and documentation. This research was conducted at Zainul Hasan Genggong University, which combines Islamic and contemporary education and is rooted in the traditions of the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic boarding school. These techniques were selected to obtain in-depth data regarding EFL students' writing practices in activities supported by the use of the Grammarly application. Several 8th-semester EFL students at Zainul Hasan Genggong University were interviewed about their experiences using Grammarly. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information or opinions on how students responded to the suggestions provided, as well as any elements involved in their writing practice and their views on how Grammarly helped them write in English. To track students' behavior while using the Grammarly app in their writing assignments, observations were conducted. Data was collected through files and screenshots sent by the EFL students via WhatsApp. These screenshots show changes in the students' writing before and after using Grammarly, and also highlight writing elements supported by Grammarly to supplement the data obtained from the interviews.

Descriptive qualitative data analysis was conducted continuously from the start of data collection through the end of the study. The researcher reviewed documentation and interview transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of how EFL students write using Grammarly. The analysis process consisted of three stages: data reduction, presentation, drawing conclusions, and verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher collected, focused, and simplified the data gathered from documentation and interviews (Saldaña, 2021). Next, to identify changes, the reduced data was systematically organized into narrative descriptions and comparison tables between students' initial drafts and revised drafts. In the final stage, the researcher identified and verified findings by interpreting all the data to answer the research questions regarding Grammarly's role in EFL students' writing practices using Grammarly and which aspects of writing are supported by Grammarly in EFL students' writing practices. To ensure that the results were consistent and accurate, the researcher continually compared data from the documentation and interviews.

To ensure the validity of the data in this qualitative study, the researcher used triangulation techniques and in-depth descriptions. Triangulation was conducted by comparing and connecting data sources from interviews, students' pre-revision drafts, revision histories in Grammarly, and post-revision drafts collected during the study. The purpose of triangulation was to ensure that information about how students read feedback, accept or reject suggestions, and revise their writing practice was consistent. In-depth descriptions of the research context, participant demographics, and writing techniques using Grammarly were provided, including how students read feedback, considered corrections, made revisions, and the amount of time spent during the process. Audit trails to maintain consistency, the researcher systematically documented the entire research process. This included interview transcripts, pre- and post-revision drafts, screenshots of Grammarly revision histories, and notes on the data analysis process.

Results and Discussion

Research Findings

Grammarly's Involvement in EFL Students' Writing Practices

The research findings indicate that Grammarly plays an active role in EFL students' writing practices. Students use it not only to correct errors but also to develop their grammar awareness, self-editing skills, and writing accuracy as they compose texts. Most participants reported that Grammarly allows them to review, revise, and evaluate their writing more independently. Additionally, participants stated that Grammarly provides immediate feedback, which helps them identify errors and understand language rules more easily. Students tend to review the suggestions provided before accepting them, rather than relying solely on the app.

Based on interview results, (INT-P1) explained, I usually read Grammarly's explanations before accepting its corrections. Similarly, (INT-P3) stated, I don't immediately accept all of Grammarly's suggestions, but this helps me understand why my sentences are incorrect and helps me avoid making the same mistakes in the future. I first evaluate whether the changes align with the meaning I want to convey.

The results of the observations show that this trend was also evident during the writing process. This finding indicates that students did not rely solely on Grammarly to correct errors; instead, they actively engaged in reviewing, evaluating, and revising their writing, demonstrating a more reflective and process-oriented approach to writing. Students were taught to read the explanations provided by Grammarly, compare them with the sentences they had written, and consider their appropriateness before applying corrections to their writing (OBS-P1; OBS-P3). Documentation data show gradual changes between the initial draft and the revised draft, and students made repeated refinements after receiving feedback from Grammarly, indicating that the revision process did not merely rely on the app's automatic suggestions.

The findings indicate that Grammarly fosters reflective writing practices by encouraging students to actively participate in the revision process rather than relying solely on automatic corrections. Students viewed Grammarly as a supplementary learning tool rather than a substitute for teachers, acknowledging that lecturers' feedback remains essential for idea development and contextual understanding. Throughout the writing process, Grammarly provided immediate feedback, enabled students to identify and address language errors, promoted reflection and revision, and enhanced their understanding of linguistic features, ultimately contributing to improved writing quality skills.

Aspects Supported by Grammarly in EFL Students' Writing Practices ***Grammar Accuracy***

The participants stated that Grammarly helped them identify grammatical errors that were previously difficult to detect on their own, thereby supporting the revision process and increasing their awareness of more accurate language use. (INT-P2) stated, Many errors that I hadn't previously noticed were detected by Grammarly. This helped me understand my weaknesses in grammar and avoid similar mistakes in the future. The study found that students used Grammarly regularly during the revision stage of the writing process. Researchers observed that after Grammarly flagged grammatical errors, students read the explanations and corrected the flagged sentences. Students often revised a single sentence repeatedly until the grammatical error indicators decreased or disappeared. This iterative revision process suggests that they actively engaged with Grammarly's feedback rather than accepting corrections passively, reflecting greater attention to linguistic accuracy and self-monitoring during writing. The primary outcome of this activity was an improvement in students' grammar. Furthermore, after receiving the first set of corrections, students did not immediately finalize their writing. Instead, they reviewed the text as a whole to ensure that their grammar usage was consistent (OBS-P2).

Documentation comparing the students' early and final drafts demonstrated clear linguistic improvements after revision. The final drafts showed more accurate use of grammar, sentence

structure, and verb forms than the initial drafts, providing evidence that Grammarly's feedback contributed to meaningful revisions rather than superficial error correction. The correction history also shows that revisions most frequently occurred in the area of grammar. According to the documented evidence, Grammarly helps students identify grammatical errors, make systematic revisions, and write with greater grammatical accuracy (DOC-P2). These findings indicate that Grammarly contributes significantly to improving students' grammatical awareness and writing accuracy by encouraging active engagement with corrective feedback, fostering reflective revision practices, and promoting more independent language learning.

Tense Usage and Subject–Verb Agreement

In an interview (INT-P4), it was revealed that Grammarly is very helpful with tense usage and subject-verb agreement, especially for learning the correct use of tenses. I now have a better understanding of when to use the present, past, and future tenses in various contexts. Tense usage and subject-verb agreement are among the aspects supported by Grammarly. Students stated that Grammarly helps them understand the correct verb forms based on the temporal context and the subject of the sentence in the tense being used. In the interview, they also emphasized, Yes, especially for correcting errors in tense and subject-verb agreement. Grammarly helps me identify the verb forms that match the subject in a sentence.

The research findings show that students use Grammarly to check their use of verb forms in accordance with the sentence's tense. The researchers found that when Grammarly flags errors in tense usage or subject-verb agreement, students first read the provided explanation before correcting the sentence. One key aspect of revision is ensuring correct verb forms according to tense and subject–verb agreement. In addition, the researchers found that students often review corrected sentences to ensure that tenses are used correctly and that subjects and verbs agree throughout the text (OBS-P4).

The documentation data consisting of students' drafts before and after revision using Grammarly, as well as the correction history generated by the app supports these findings. A comparison of the two versions of the writing shows that the final draft corrects errors in tense usage and subject-verb agreement. This evidence confirms that Grammarly helps students identify verbs that match the tense being used, resulting in grammatically more accurate sentences (DOC-P4). These findings indicate that Grammarly strengthens students' understanding of basic grammatical structures in English writing, particularly regarding tense usage and subject-verb agreement. By providing contextual feedback, Grammarly helps students determine the correct verb form and align it with the appropriate tense, thereby enhancing their grammatical awareness and the accuracy of their writing in terms of tense usage.

Sentence Structure, Vocabulary Choice, and Writing Clarity

In addition, the study found that Grammarly supports improvements in sentence structure, word choice, and writing clarity, contributing to more coherent and readable texts. EFL students reported that Grammarly provides more appropriate word suggestions and helps them construct clearer sentences. INT-P5 stated: Yes, especially in terms of grammar and word choice. Grammarly helps me choose more appropriate words so that my sentences become clearer and more effective.

The results of the observation showed that students used Grammarly to improve sentence structure, vocabulary selection, and the clarity of the ideas they conveyed. The researcher found that students corrected grammatical errors deemed ineffective for clarifying the intended meaning by using the words recommended by Grammarly. This indicates that Grammarly is not only used to correct grammatical errors but also helps improve sentence structure and writing clarity (OBS-P5).

Documentation data, which includes students' drafts before and after the revision process using Grammarly, supports these findings. There are changes in sentence structure, word choice, and the clarity of idea presentation, as seen when comparing the two versions of the writing (DOC-P5).

Quality of Writing and Independent Learning

Furthermore, the study's findings show that Grammarly encourages self-directed learning and improves writing quality. Students reported that they became more meticulous and responsible in evaluating their own writing. (INT-P3) stated, Yes, my writing looks more professional than before. After using Grammarly, I feel my writing is neater and meets academic writing standards. (INT-P1) I usually read Grammarly's explanations before accepting the suggested corrections. This helps me understand why my sentences are incorrect and avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future.

Overall, the findings indicate strong evidence of Grammarly's effectiveness in supporting the writing practices of EFL students. Overall, this encompasses aspects such as Grammatical accuracy, Tense Usage and Subject-Verb Agreement, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary Choice, Clarity of Writing, Quality of their writing and Independent Learning.

Discussion

Grammarly's Involvement in EFL Students' Writing Practices

The results show that Grammarly is actively involved in EFL students' writing practices, not only as an error correction tool but also as a learning support tool that helps students throughout the writing process. Students use Grammarly to identify errors, revise their texts, evaluate their progress, and reflect on their writing performance, indicating that the application supports a more reflective and self-regulated approach to writing. The results indicate that Grammarly shifts students' writing styles from product-focused to process-focused. According to (Hyland, 2019), the concept of process writing describes writing as a recursive process that includes planning, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating text, rather than simply creating a final product. During the revision stage, students use Grammarly repeatedly, indicating that technology has become an essential part of the writing process.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that students do not automatically accept Grammarly's suggestions; instead, they critically evaluate the feedback before deciding whether to apply it to their writing. For example, Participant 1 stated that they usually read Grammarly's explanations before accepting corrections, and Participant 3 stated that they check whether the suggested revisions. These behaviors indicate that metacognitive awareness has developed. Because metacognitive awareness is linked to self-directed learning, students actively monitor, evaluate, and control their own learning process. Grammar appears to facilitate this process by encouraging students to become active decision-makers rather than passively receiving automatic feedback.

Furthermore, these results support previous research (Armanda et al., 2022; Fitria, 2021; Raihan et al., 2023), which found that Grammarly encourages self-editing and independent learning among EFL students. However, these studies specifically looked at students' writing practices, not just their perceptions or writing outcomes.

The results showed that Grammarly was integrated into students' writing, especially during revision, reflection, and evaluation. Another important finding was the role of immediate feedback. Students reported that Grammarly helped them better understand language rules and instantly identify errors. The Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) theory suggests that immediate feedback provided by artificial intelligence-based writing technology can accelerate the language learning process (Ranalli, 2021). Furthermore, according to (Wang et al., 2024), immediate feedback shortens the learning cycle because students can identify their shortcomings and improve their work without waiting for teacher feedback. This may be why students in this study felt more engaged during the writing process.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that Grammarly functions primarily as a mediating tool rather than a teacher replacement. Students recognize that Grammarly cannot fully understand contextual meaning and that teacher feedback is still necessary. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory argues that social interactions and tools mediate learning (Javanbakhti, 2021). This theory can be used to explain these findings. While Grammarly functions as a technological mediator, teachers provide contextual, conceptual, and pedagogical support. Furthermore, repeatedly viewing Grammarly's corrections helps students recognize common language errors.

According to Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, language learning occurs when learners consciously notice linguistic forms during language use (Leow, 2026). The findings support this hypothesis. Students gradually became aware of their grammatical weaknesses and learned to avoid the same mistakes by using Grammarly. Students' self-confidence was also affected. Students reported that after using Grammarly to revise their writing, they felt more confident. This was because they perceived their texts as more professional and accurate. According to the results (Hakiki, 2021; Khonirin & Roslaini, 2024), Grammarly increased students' confidence and desire to write in English.

Overall, Grammarly does a lot for this research beyond correcting grammatical errors. During the writing process, the app helps students think critically, gain metacognitive awareness, learn independently, and actively participate in the learning process.

Aspects Supported by Grammarly in EFL Students' Writing Practices

Grammarly supports various aspects of EFL students' writing skills, such as grammatical accuracy, tense usage, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, vocabulary choice, writing quality, confidence, and self-directed learning or independent learning. Grammarly primarily supports grammatical accuracy, sentence structure vocabulary choice at all. Students reported that the app helped them identify grammatical errors they hadn't previously noticed. These results align with the findings of (Hidayat & Sari, 2025), who found that students showed significant improvement in their writing accuracy after using Grammarly in their writing lessons.

Data-driven language learning theory can be used to explain these findings. This theory suggests that repeatedly presenting language patterns helps students understand grammatical structures. Students gradually improve their grammatical awareness and reduce recurring errors through continuous interaction with Grammarly's corrections. Grammarly's support for tense usage and subject-verb agreement is another crucial component because these grammatical features ensure that sentences convey accurate meaning and maintain coherence, making students' writing easier to understand. EFL students face significant challenges in both of these grammatical areas because they both require equal attention to tense references and sentence subjects. Grammarly helps students choose the appropriate verb form for the situation. This assistance, also known as scaffolding, enables students to complete tasks that initially exceed their independent capabilities, according to sociocultural learning theory (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022). Therefore, Grammarly can be considered a technological tool that supports language learning by providing immediate feedback, encouraging students to reflect on their errors, and promoting independent revision during the writing process.

Furthermore, the findings indicated improvements in vocabulary choice, writing clarity, and sentence structure, suggesting that Grammarly supported students in expressing their ideas more precisely and producing texts that were easier for readers to understand. Specifically, Participant 5 stated that Grammarly helped them choose more precise words, resulting in clearer and more effective sentences. According to (Hyland, 2019), these findings align with the idea that organizing ideas and using appropriate linguistic resources are necessary for communicating meaning effectively. Furthermore, Grammarly improved the quality of students' writing. Students perceived their writing as

more professional and meeting academic writing standards. According to (Khonirin & Roslaini, 2024), Grammarly improved readability, language accuracy, and overall writing quality.

The research findings show that Grammarly supports self-directed learning. By evaluating their own writing, students become more careful, responsible, and independent. This finding supports the theory of self-directed learning, which emphasizes that students are responsible for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning progress (Lai et al., 2025). Despite its benefits, Grammarly should not be used as a substitute for a teacher. Artificial intelligence-based technology is unable to understand contextual meaning, rhetorical intent, or specific scientific writing conventions. Therefore, human feedback remains crucial for developing high-level writing skills. Overall, the results suggest that Grammarly serves not only as an error-detecting application but also as a system that helps students learn holistically. This helps them develop affectively, linguistically, and cognitively throughout the writing process.

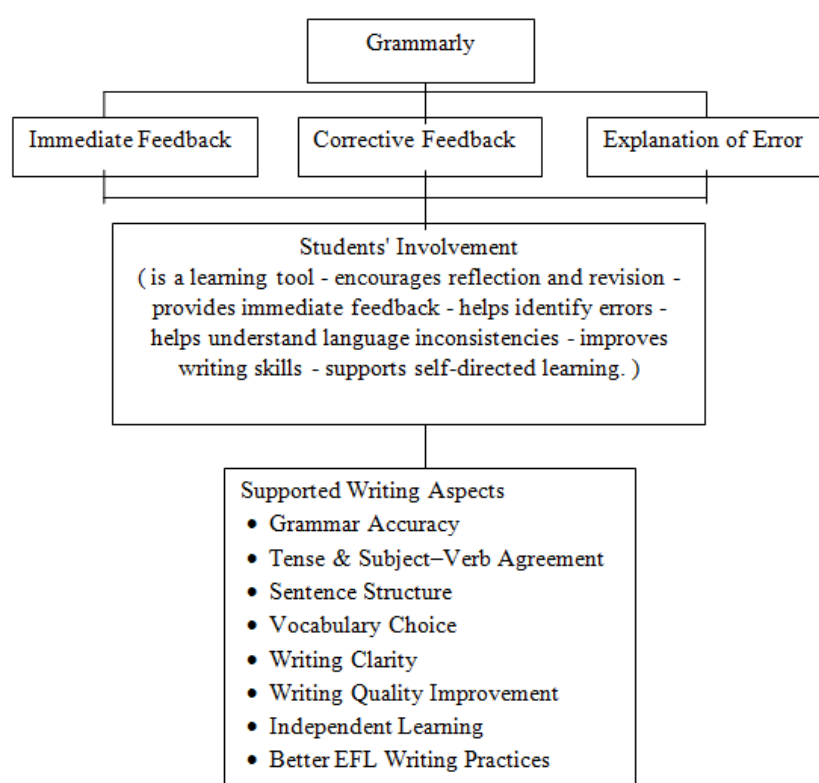


Figure 1. The Grammarly-supported writing process of EFL students, showing the stages of feedback, review, revision, and final writing

Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, Grammarly has become an important part of EFL students' learning process in writing activities, rather than merely serving as an automatic error-correction tool. The results indicate that students actively engaged with Grammarly to review, revise, evaluate, and reflect on their writing. They also demonstrated that, instead of accepting the suggestions automatically, they critically considered the feedback provided before incorporating it into their texts. This suggests that Grammarly encourages active participation and helps students become more thoughtful and reflective about their writing.

In addition, the findings showed that Grammarly supported various aspects of students' writing. These included grammatical accuracy, tense usage, subject–verb agreement, sentence structure, vocabulary choice, writing clarity, confidence, and overall writing quality. The immediate feedback

provided by Grammarly helped students gain a better understanding of language rules, identify recurring errors, and become more aware of their linguistic weaknesses. As a result, students felt more confident and developed a greater sense of responsibility throughout the writing process.

Due to its limitations in understanding contextual meaning, rhetorical intent, and idea development, Grammarly cannot fully replace teachers' feedback. Therefore, it is more appropriately used as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for teachers or lecturers. Overall, this study demonstrates that Grammarly transforms EFL students' writing practices from a product-oriented activity into a process-oriented one that emphasizes reflection, evaluation, and autonomous learning. Future studies are recommended to involve a larger number of participants, more diverse educational contexts, and longer observation periods.

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